THE LAST CHRONICLE OF BARSET

C. R. GRAHAM

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THE LAST CHRONICLE OF BARSET

BY

ANTHONY TROLLOPE

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THE LAST CHRONICLE OF BARSET.

CHAPTER I.

HOW DID HE GET IT?

"I CAN never bring myself to believe it, John," said Mary Walker, the pretty daughter of Mr. George Walker, attorney of Silverbridge. Walker and Winthrop was the name of the firm, and they were respectable people, who did all the solicitors' business that had to be done in that part of Barsetshire on behalf of the Crown, were employed on the local business of the Duke of Omnium, who is great in those parts, and altogether held their heads up high, as provincial lawyers often do. They,—the Walkers,—lived in a great brick house in the middle of the town, gave dinners, to which the county gentlemen not unfrequently condescended to come, and in a mild way led the fashion in Silverbridge. "I can never bring myself to believe it, John," said Miss Walker.

"You 'll have to bring yourself to believe it," said John, without taking his eyes from his book.

"A clergyman,—and such a clergyman too!"

"I don't see that that has anything to do with it." And as he now spoke John did take his eyes off his book. "Why should not a clergyman turn thief as well as anybody else? You girls always seem to forget that clergymen are only men after all."

"Their conduct is likely to be better than that of other men, I think."

"I deny it utterly," said John Walker. "I 'll undertake to say that at this moment there are more clergymen in debt in Barsetshire than there are either lawyers or doctors. This man has always been in debt. Since he has been in the county I don't think he has ever been able to show his face in the High Street of Silverbridge."

"John, that is saying more than you have a right to say," said Mrs. Walker.

"Why, mother, this very cheque was given to a butcher who had threatened a few days before to post bills all about the county, giving an account of the debt that was due to him, if the money was not paid at once."

"More shame for Mr. Fletcher," said Mary. "He has made a fortune as butcher in Silverbridge."

"What has that to do with it? Of course a man likes to have his money. He had written three times to the bishop, and he had sent a man over to Hogglestock to get his little bill settled six days running. You see he got it at last. Of course a tradesman must look for his money."

"Mamma, do you think that Mr. Crawley stole the cheque?" Mary, as she asked the question, came and stood over her mother, looking at her with anxious eyes.

"I would rather give no opinion, my dear."

"But you must think something, when everybody is talking about it, mamma."

"Of course my mother thinks he did," said John, going back to his book. "It is impossible that she should think otherwise."

"That is not fair, John," said Mrs. Walker; "and I won't have you fabricate thoughts for me, or put the expression of them into my mouth. The whole affair is very painful, and as your father is engaged in the inquiry I think that the less said about the matter in this house the better. I am sure that that would be your father's feeling."

"Of course I should say nothing about it before him," said Mary. "I know that papa does not wish to have it talked about. But how is one to help thinking about such a thing? It would be so terrible for all of us who belong to the church."

"I do not see that at all," said John. "Mr. Crawley is not more than any other man just because he 's a clergyman. I hate all that kind of clap-trap. There are a lot of people here in Silverbridge who think the matter should n't be followed up because the man is in a position which makes the crime more criminal in him than it would be in another."

"But I feel sure that Mr. Crawley has committed no crime at all," said Mary.

"My dear," said Mrs. Walker, "I have just said that I would rather you would not talk about it. Papa will be in directly."

"I won't, mamma;—only——"

"Only! yes; just only!" said John. "She 'd go on till dinner if any one would stay to hear her."

"You 've said twice as much as I have, John." But John had left the room before his sister's last words could reach him.

"You know, mamma, it is quite impossible not to help thinking of it," said Mary.

"I dare say it is, my dear."

"And when one knows the people it does make it so dreadful."

"But do you know them? I never spoke to Mr. Crawley in my life, and I do not think I ever saw her."

"I knew Grace very well;—when she used to come first to Miss Prettyman's school."

"Poor girl! I pity her."

"Pity her! Pity is no word for it, mamma. My heart bleeds for them. And yet I do not believe for a moment that he stole the cheque. How can it be possible? For though he may have been in debt because they have been so very, very poor; yet we all know that he has been an excellent clergyman. When the Robartses were dining here last I heard Mrs. Robarts say that for piety and devotion to his duties she had hardly ever seen any one equal to him. And the Robartses know more of them than anybody."

"They say that the dean is his great friend."

"What a pity it is that the Arabins should be away just now when he is in such trouble." And in this way the mother and daughter went on discussing the question of the clergyman's guilt in spite of Mrs. Walker's previously expressed desire that nothing more might be said about it. But Mrs. Walker, like many other mothers, was apt to be more free in converse with her daughter than she was with her son. While

they were thus talking the father came in from his office, and then the subject was dropped. He was a man between fifty and sixty years of age, with grey hair, rather short, and somewhat corpulent, but still gifted with that amount of personal comeliness which comfortable position and the respect of others will generally seem to give. A man rarely carries himself meanly whom the world holds high in esteem.

"I am very tired, my dear," said Mr. Walker.

"You look tired. Come and sit down for a few minutes before you dress. Mary, get your father's slippers." Mary instantly ran to the door.

"Thanks, my darling," said the father. And then he whispered to his wife, as soon as Mary was out of hearing, "I fear that unfortunate man is guilty. I fear he is! I fear he is!"

"Oh, heavens! what will become of them?"

"What indeed! She has been with me to-day."

"Has she? And what could you say to her?"

"I told her at first that I could not see her, and begged her not to speak to me about it. I tried to make her understand that she should go to some one else. But it was of no use."

"And how did it end?"

"I asked her to go in to you, but she declined. She said you could do nothing for her."

"And does she think her husband guilty?"

"No, indeed. She think him guilty! Nothing on earth,—or from heaven either, as I take it, would make her suppose it to be possible. She came to me simply to tell me how good he was."

"I love her for that," said Mrs. Walker.

"So did I. But what is the good of loving her?

Thank you, dearest. I 'll get your slippers for you some day, perhaps."

The whole county was astir in this matter of the alleged guilt of the Reverend Josiah Crawley,—the whole county, almost as keenly as the family of Mr. Walker, of Silverbridge. The crime laid to his charge was the theft of a cheque for twenty pounds, which he was said to have stolen out of a pocket-book left or dropped in his house, and to have passed as money into the hands of one Fletcher, a butcher of Silverbridge, to whom he was indebted. Mr. Crawley was in those days the perpetual curate of Hogglestock, a parish in the northern extremity of East Barsetshire; a man known by all who knew anything of him to be very poor,—an unhappy, moody, disappointed man, upon whom the troubles of the world always seemed to come with a double weight. But he had ever been respected as a clergyman, since his old friend Mr. Arabin, the dean of Barchester, had given him the small incumbency which he now held. Though moody, unhappy, and disappointed, he was a hard-working, conscientious pastor among the poor people with whom his lot was cast; for in the parish of Hogglestock there resided only a few farmers higher in degree than field laborers, brickmakers, and such-like. Mr. Crawley had now passed some ten years of his life at Hogglestock; and during those years he had worked very hard to do his duty, struggling to teach the people around him perhaps too much of the mystery, but something also of the comfort, of religion. That he had become popular in his parish cannot be said of him. He was not a man to make himself popular in any position. I have said that he was

moody and disappointed. He was even worse than this; he was morose, sometimes almost to insanity. There had been days in which even his wife had found it impossible to deal with him otherwise than as with an acknowledged lunatic. And this was known among the farmers, who talked about their clergyman among themselves as though he were a madman. But among the very poor, among the brickmakers of Hoggle End,—a lawless, drunken, terribly rough lot of humanity,—he was held in high respect; for they knew that he lived hardly, as they lived; that he worked hard, as they worked; and that the outside world was hard to him, as it was to them; and there had been an apparent sincerity of godliness about the man, and a manifest struggle to do his duty in spite of the world's ill-usage, which had won its way even with the rough; so that Mr. Crawley's name had stood high with many in his parish, in spite of the unfortunate peculiarity of his disposition. This was the man who was now accused of stealing a cheque for twenty pounds.

But before the circumstances of the alleged theft are stated a word or two must be said as to Mr. Crawley's family. It is declared that a good wife is a crown to her husband, but Mrs. Crawley had been much more than a crown to him. As had regarded all the inner life of the man,—all that portion of his life which had not been passed in the pulpit or in pastoral teaching,—she had been crown, throne, and sceptre all in one. That she had endured with him and on his behalf the miseries of poverty, and the troubles of a life which had known no smiles, is perhaps not to be alleged as much to her honour. She had joined herself to him for better or worse, and it was her manifest duty to bear

such things. Wives always have to bear them, knowing when they marry that they must take their chance. Mr. Crawley might have been a bishop, and Mrs. Crawley, when she married him, perhaps thought it probable that such would be his fortune. Instead of that, he was now, just as he was approaching his fiftieth year, a perpetual curate, with an income of one hundred and thirty pounds per annum,—and a family. That had been Mrs. Crawley's luck in life, and of course she bore it. But she had also done much more than this. She had striven hard to be contented, or, rather, to appear to be contented, when he had been most wretched and most moody. She had struggled to conceal from him her own conviction as to his half-insanity, treating him at the same time with the respect due to an honoured father of a family, and with the careful measured indulgence fit for a sick and wayward child. In all the terrible troubles of their life her courage had been higher than his. The metal of which she was made had been tempered to a steel which was very rare and fine, but the rareness and fineness of which he had failed, if to appreciate, at any rate to imitate. He had often told her that she was without pride, because she had stooped to receive from others, on his behalf and on behalf of her children, things which were very needful, but which she could not buy. He had told her that she was a beggar, and that it was better to starve than to beg. She had borne the rebuke without a word in reply, and had then begged again for him and had endured the starvation herself. Nothing in their poverty had, for years past, been a shame to her; but every accident of their poverty was still, and ever had been, a living disgrace to him.

They had had many children, and three were still alive. Of the eldest, Grace Crawley, we shall hear much in the coming story. She was at this time nineteen years old, and there were those who said that, in spite of her poverty, her shabby outward apparel, and a certain thin, unfledged, unrounded form of person, a want of fulness in the lines of her figure, she was the prettiest girl in that part of the world. She was living now at a school in Silverbridge, where for the last year she had been a teacher; and there were many in Silverbridge who declared that very bright prospects were opening to her,—that young Major Grantly of Cosby Lodge, who, though a widower with a young child, was the cynosure of all female eyes in and round Silverbridge, had found beauty in her thin face, and that Grace Crawley's fortune was made in the teeth, as it were, of the prevailing ill-fortune of her family. Bob Crawley, who was two years younger, was now at Marlbro' School, from whence it was intended that he should proceed to Cambridge and be educated there at the expense of his godfather, Dean Arabin. In this also the world saw a stroke of good luck. But then nothing was lucky to Mr. Crawley. Bob, indeed, who had done very well at school, might do well at Cambridge,—might do great things there. But Mr. Crawley would almost have preferred that the boy should work in the fields, than that he should be educated in a manner so manifestly eleemosynary. And then his clothes! How was he to be provided with clothes fit either for school or for college? But the dean and Mrs. Crawley between them managed this, leaving Mr. Crawley very much in the dark, as Mrs. Crawley was in the habit of leaving him. Then there was a younger

daughter, Jane, still at home, who passed her life between her mother's work-table and her father's Greek, mending linen and learning to scan iambics,—for Mr. Crawley in his early days had been a ripe scholar.

And now there had come upon them all this terribly crushing disaster. That poor Mr. Crawley had gradually got himself into a mess of debt at Silverbridge, from which he was quite unable to extricate himself, was generally known by all the world both of Silverbridge and Hogglestock. To a great many it was known that Dean Arabin had paid money for him, very much contrary to his own consent, and that he had quarrelled, or attempted to quarrel, with the dean in consequence,—had so attempted, although the money had in part passed through his own hands. There had been one creditor, Fletcher, the butcher of Silverbridge, who had of late been specially hard upon poor Crawley. This man, who had not been without good-nature in his dealings, had heard stories of the dean's good-will and such-like, and had loudly expressed his opinion that the perpetual curate of Hogglestock would show a higher pride in allowing himself to be indebted to a rich brother clergyman, than in remaining under thrall to a butcher. And thus a rumour had grown up. And then the butcher had written repeated letters to the bishop,—to Bishop Proudie of Barchester,—who had at first caused his chaplain to answer them, and had told Mr. Crawley somewhat roundly what was his opinion of a clergyman who eat meat and did not pay for it. But nothing that the bishop could say or do enabled Mr. Crawley to pay the butcher. It was very grievous to such a man as Mr. Crawley to receive these letters from

such a man as Bishop Proudie. The letters came, and made festering wounds, but then there was an end of them. And at last there had come forth from the butcher's shop a threat that if the money were not paid by a certain date, printed bills should be posted about the county. All who heard of this in Silverbridge were very angry with Mr. Fletcher, for no one there had ever known a tradesman to take such a step before; but Fletcher swore that he would persevere, and defended himself by showing that six or seven months since, in the spring of the year, Mr. Crawley had been paying money in Silverbridge, but had paid none to him,—to him who had been not only his earliest but his most enduring creditor. "He got money from the dean in March," said Mr. Fletcher to Mr. Walker, "and he paid twelve pounds ten to Green, and seventeen pounds to Grobury, the baker." It was that seventeen pounds to Grobury, the baker, for flour, which made the butcher so fixedly determined to smite the poor clergyman hip and thigh. "And he paid money to Hall, and to Mrs. Holt, and to a deal more; but he never came near my shop. If he had even shown himself I would not have said so much about it." And then a day before the date named, Mrs. Crawley had come to Silverbridge, and had paid the butcher twenty pounds in four five-pound notes. So far Fletcher the butcher had been successful.

Some six weeks after this, inquiry began to be made as to a certain cheque for twenty pounds drawn by Lord Lufton on his bankers in London, which cheque had been lost early in the spring by Mr. Soames, Lord Lufton's man of business in Barsetshire, together with a pocket-book in which it had been folded. This

pocket-book Soames had believed himself to have left at Mr. Crawley's house, and had gone so far, even at the time of the loss, as to express his absolute conviction that he had so left it. He was in the habit of paying a rent-charge to Mr. Crawley on behalf of Lord Lufton, amounting to twenty pounds four shillings, every half-year. Lord Lufton held the large tithes of Hogglestock, and paid annually a sum of forty pounds eight shillings to the incumbent. This amount was, as a rule, remitted punctually by Mr. Soames through the post. On the occasion now spoken of he had had some reason for visiting Hogglestock and had paid the money personally to Mr. Crawley. Of so much there was no doubt. But he had paid it by a cheque drawn by himself on his own bankers at Barchester, and that cheque had been cashed in the ordinary way on the next morning. On returning to his own house in Barchester he had missed his pocket-book, and had written to Mr. Crawley to make inquiry. There had been no money in it, beyond the cheque drawn by Lord Lufton for twenty pounds. Mr. Crawley had answered this letter by another, saying that no pocket-book had been found in his house. All this had happened in March.

In October, Mrs. Crawley paid the twenty pounds to Fletcher, the butcher, and in November Lord Lufton's cheque was traced back through the Barchester bank to Mr. Crawley's hands. A brickmaker of Hoggle End, much favoured by Mr. Crawley, had asked for change over the counter of this Barchester bank,—not, as will be understood, the bank on which the cheque was drawn,—and had received it. The accommodation had been refused to the man at first, but when he presented the cheque the second day,

bearing Mr. Crawley's name on the back of it, together with a note from Mr. Crawley himself, the money had been given for it; and the identical notes so paid had been given to Fletcher, the butcher, on the next day by Mrs. Crawley. When inquiry was made, Mr. Crawley stated that the cheque had been paid to him by Mr. Soames, on behalf of the rent-charge due to him by Lord Lufton. But the error of this statement was at once made manifest. There was the cheque, signed by Mr. Soames himself, for the exact amount,—twenty pounds four shillings. As he himself declared, he had never in his life paid money on behalf of Lord Lufton by a cheque drawn by his lordship. The cheque given by Lord Lufton, and which had been lost, had been a private matter between them. His lordship had simply wanted change in his pocket, and his agent had given it to him. Mr. Crawley was speedily shown to be altogether wrong in the statement made to account for possession of the cheque.

Then he became very moody and would say nothing further. But his wife, who had known nothing of his first statement when made, came forward and declared that she believed the cheque for twenty pounds to be a part of a present given by Dean Arabin to her husband in April last. There had been, she said, great heartburnings about this gift, and she had hardly dared to speak to her husband on the subject. An execution had been threatened in the house by Grobury, the baker, of which the dean had heard. Then there had been some scenes at the deanery between her husband and the dean and Mrs. Arabin, as to which she had subsequently heard much from Mrs. Arabin. Mrs. Arabin had told her that money had been given,—and

at last taken. Indeed, so much had been very apparent, as bills had been paid to the amount of at least fifty pounds. When the threat made by the butcher had reached her husband's ears, the effect upon him had been very grievous. All this was the story told by Mrs. Crawley to Mr. Walker, the lawyer, when he was pushing his inquiries. She, poor woman, at any rate told all that she knew. Her husband had told her one morning, when the butcher's threat was weighing heavily on his mind, speaking to her in such a humour that she found it impossible to cross-question him, that he had still money left, though it was money which he had hoped that he would not be driven to use; and he had given her the four five-pound notes, and had told her to go to Silverbridge and satisfy the man who was so eager for his money. She had done so, and had felt no doubt that the money so forthcoming had been given by the dean. That was the story as told by Mrs. Crawley.

But how could she explain her husband's statement as to the cheque, which had been shown to be altogether false? All this passed between Mr. Walker and Mrs. Crawley, and the lawyer was very gentle with her. In the first stages of the inquiry he had simply desired to learn the truth, and place the clergyman above suspicion. Latterly, being bound as he was to follow the matter up officially, he would not have seen Mrs. Crawley, had be been able to escape that lady's importunity. "Mr. Walker," she had said, at last, "you do not know my husband. No one knows him but I. It is hard to have to tell you of all our troubles." "If I can lessen them, trust me that I will do so," said the lawyer. "No one, I think, can lessen

them in this world," said the lady. "The truth is, sir, that my husband often knows not what he says. When he declared that the money had been paid to him by Mr. Soames, most certainly he thought so. There are times when in his misery he knows not what he says,—when he forgets everything."

Up to this period Mr. Walker had not suspected Mr. Crawley of anything dishonest, nor did he suspect him as yet. The poor man had probably received the money from the dean, and had told the lie about it, not choosing to own that he had taken money from his rich friend, and thinking that there would be no further inquiry. He had been very foolish, and that would be the end of it. Mr. Soames was by no means so good-natured in his belief. "How should my pocket-book have got into Dean Arabin's hands?" said Mr. Soames, almost triumphantly. "And then I felt sure at the time that I had left it at Crawley's house!"

Mr. Walker wrote a letter to the dean, who at that moment was in Florence, on his way to Rome, from whence he was going on to the Holy Land. There came back a letter from Dr. Arabin, saying that on the 17th of March he had given to Mr. Crawley a sum of fifty pounds, and that the payment had been made with five Bank of England notes of ten pounds each, which had been handed by him to his friend in the library at the deanery. The letter was very short, and may, perhaps, be described as having been almost curt. Mr. Walker, in his anxiety to do the best he could for Mr. Crawley, had simply asked a question as to the nature of the transaction between the two gentlemen, saying that no doubt the dean's answer would clear up a little mystery which existed at present respecting a

cheque for twenty pounds. The dean in answer simply stated the fact as it has been given above; but he wrote to Mr. Crawley begging to know what was in truth this new difficulty, and offering any assistance in his power. He explained all the circumstances of the money, as he remembered them. The sum advanced had certainly consisted of fifty pounds, and there had certainly been five Bank of England notes. He had put the notes into an envelope, which he had not closed, but had addressed to Mr. Crawley, and had placed this envelope in his friend's hands. He went on to say that Mrs. Arabin would have written, but that she was in Paris with her son. Mrs. Arabin was to remain in Paris during his absence in the Holy Land, and meet him in Italy on his return. As she was so much nearer at hand, the dean expressed a hope that Mrs. Crawley would apply to her if there was any trouble.

The letter to Mr. Walker was conclusive as to the dean's money. Mr. Crawley had not received Lord Lufton's cheque from the dean. Then whence had he received it? The poor wife was left by the lawyer to obtain further information from her husband. Ah, who can tell how terrible were the scenes between that poor pair of wretches, as the wife endeavoured to learn the truth from her miserable, half-maddened husband! That her husband had been honest throughout, she had not any shadow of doubt. She did not doubt that to her at least he endeavoured to tell the truth, as far as his poor racked, imperfect memory would allow him to remember what was true and what was not true. The upshot of it all was that the husband declared that he still believed that the money had come to him from the

dean. He had kept it by him, not wishing to use it if he could help it. He had forgotten it,—so he said at times,—having understood from Arabin that he was to have fifty pounds, and having received more. If it had not come to him from the dean, then it had been sent to him by the Prince of Evil for his utter undoing; and there were times in which he seemed to think that such had been the manner in which the fatal cheque had reached him. In all that he said he was terribly confused, contradictory, unintelligible,—speaking almost as a madman might speak,—ending always by declaring that the cruelty of the world had been too much for him, that the waters were meeting over his head, and praying for God's mercy to remove him from the world. It need hardly be said that his poor wife in these days had a burden on her shoulders that was more than enough to crush any woman.

She at last acknowledged to Mr. Walker that she could not account for the twenty pounds. She herself would write again to the dean about it, but she hardly hoped for any further assistance there. "The dean's answer is very plain," said Mr. Walker. "He says that he gave Mr. Crawley five ten-pound notes, and those five notes we have traced to Mr. Crawley's hands." Then Mrs. Crawley could say nothing further beyond making protestations of her husband's innocence.

CHAPTER II.

"BY HEAVENS, HE HAD BETTER NOT!"

I MUST ask the reader to make the acquaintance of Major Grantly of Cosby Lodge, before he is introduced to the family of Mr. Crawley, at their parsonage in Hogglestock. It has been said that Major Grantly had thrown a favourable eye on Grace Crawley,—by which report occasion was given to all men and women in those parts to hint that the Crawleys, with all their piety and humility, were very cunning, and that one of the Grantlys was,—to say the least of it,—very soft, admitted as it was throughout the county of Barsetshire, that there was no family therein more widely awake to the affairs generally of this world and the next combined, than the family of which Archdeacon Grantly was the respected head and patriarch. Mrs. Walker, the most good-natured woman in Silverbridge, had acknowledged to her daughter that she could not understand it,—that she could not see anything at all in Grace Crawley. Mr. Walker had shrugged his shoulders and expressed a confident belief that Major Grantly had not a shilling of his own beyond his half-pay and his late wife's fortune, which was only six thousand pounds. Others, who were ill-natured, had declared that Grace Crawley was little better than a

beggar, and that she could not possibly have acquired the manners of a gentlewoman. Fletcher the butcher had wondered whether the major would pay his future father-in-law's debts; and Dr. Tempest, the old rector of Silverbridge, whose four daughters were all as yet unmarried, had turned up his old nose, and had hinted that half-pay majors did not get caught in marriage so easily as that.

Such and such like had been the expressions of the opinion of men and women in Silverbridge. But the matter had been discussed further afield than at Silverbridge, and had been allowed to intrude itself as a most unwelcome subject into the family conclave of the archdeacon's rectory. To those who have not as yet learned the fact from the public character and well-appreciated reputation of the man, let it be known that Archdeacon Grantly was at this time, as he had been for many years previously, Archdeacon of Barchester and Rector of Plumstead Episcopi. A rich and prosperous man he had ever been,—though he also had had his sore troubles, as we all have,—his having arisen chiefly from want of that higher ecclesiastical promotion which his soul had coveted, and for which the whole tenour of his life had especially fitted him. Now, in his green old age, he had ceased to covet, but had not ceased to repine. He had ceased to covet aught for himself, but still coveted much for his children; and for him such a marriage as this which was now suggested for his son was encompassed almost with the bitterness of death. "I think it would kill me," he had said to his wife; "by heavens, I think it would be my death!"

A daughter of the archdeacon had made a splendid

matrimonial alliance,—so splendid that its history was at the time known to all the aristocracy of the county, and had not been altogether forgotten by any of those who keep themselves well instructed in the details of the peerage. Griselda Grantly had married Lord Dumbello, the eldest son of the Marquis of Hartletop,—than whom no English nobleman was more puissant, if broad acres, many castles, high title, and stars and ribbons are any signs of puissance,—and she was now, herself, Marchioness of Hartletop, with a little Lord Dumbello of her own. The daughter's visits to the parsonage of her father were of necessity rare, such necessity having come from her own altered sphere of life. A Marchioness of Hartletop has special duties which will hardly permit her to devote herself frequently to the humdrum society of a clerical father and mother. That it would be so, father and mother had understood when they sent the fortunate girl forth to a higher world. But, now and again, since her august marriage, she had laid her coroneted head upon one of the old rectory pillows for a night or so, and on such occasions all the Plumsteadians had been loud in praise of her condescension. Now it happened that when this second and more aggravated blast of the evil wind reached the rectory,—the renewed waft of the tidings as to Major Grantly's infatuation regarding Miss Grace Crawley, which, on its renewal, seemed to bring with it something of confirmation,—it chanced, I say, that at that moment Griselda, Marchioness of Hartletop, was gracing the paternal mansion. It need hardly be said that the father was not slow to invoke such a daughter's counsel, and such a sister's aid.

I am not quite sure that the mother would have

been equally quick to ask her daughter's advice had she been left in the matter entirely to her own propensities. Mrs. Grantly had ever loved her daughter dearly, and had been very proud of that great success in life which Griselda had achieved; but in late years, the child had become, as a woman, separate from the mother, and there had arisen, not unnaturally, a break of that close confidence which in early years had existed between them. Griselda, Marchioness of Hartletop, was more than ever a daughter to the archdeacon, even though he might never see her. Nothing could rob him of the honour of such a progeny,—nothing, even though there had been actual estrangement between them. But it was not so with Mrs. Grantly. Griselda had done very well, and Mrs. Grantly had rejoiced; but she had lost her child. Now the major, who had done well also, though in a much lesser degree, was still her child, moving in the same sphere of life with her, still dependent in a great degree upon his father's bounty, a neighbour in the county, a frequent visitor at the parsonage, and a visitor who could be received without any of that trouble which attended the unfrequent comings of Griselda, the marchioness, to the home of her youth. And for this reason Mrs. Grantly, terribly put out as she was at the idea of a marriage between her son and one standing so poorly in the world's esteem as Grace Crawley, would not have brought forward the matter before her daughter, had she been left to her own desires. A marchioness in one's family is a tower of strength, no doubt; but there are counsellors so strong that we do not wish to trust them, lest in the trusting we ourselves be overwhelmed by their strength. Now Mrs. Grantly

was by no means willing to throw her influence into the hands of her titled daughter.

But the titled daughter was consulted and gave her advice. On the occasion of the present visit to Plumstead she had consented to lay her head for two nights on the parsonage pillows, and on the second evening her brother the major was to come over from Cosby Lodge to meet her. Before his coming the affair of Grace Crawley was discussed.

"It would break my heart, Griselda," said the archdeacon, piteously,—"and your mother's."

"There is nothing against the girl's character," said Mrs. Grantly, "and the father and mother are gentlefolks by birth; but such a marriage for Henry would be very unseemly."

"To make it worse, there is this terrible story about him," said the archdeacon.

"I don't suppose there is much in that," said Mrs. Grantly.

"I can't say. There is no knowing. They told me to-day in Barchester that Soames is pressing the case against him."

"Who is Soames, papa?" asked the marchioness.

"He is Lord Lufton's man of business, my dear."

"Oh, Lord Lufton's man of business!" There was something of a sneer in the tone of the lady's voice as she mentioned Lord Lufton's name.

"I am told," continued the archdeacon, "that Soames declares the cheque was taken from a pocket-book which he left by accident in Crawley's house."

"You don't mean to say, archdeacon, that you think that Mr. Crawley,—a clergyman,—stole it!" said Mrs. Grantly.

"I don't say anything of the kind, my dear. But supposing Mr. Crawley to be as honest as the sun, you would n't wish Henry to marry his daughter."

"Certainly not," said the mother. "It would be an unfitting marriage. The poor girl has had no advantages."

"He is not able even to pay his baker's bill. I always thought Arabin was very wrong to place such a man in such a parish as Hogglestock. Of course the family could not live there." The Arabin here spoken of was Dr. Arabin, dean of Barchester. The dean and the archdeacon had married sisters, and there was much intimacy between the families.

"After all it is only a rumour as yet," said Mrs. Grantly.

"Fothergill told me only yesterday, that he sees her almost every day," said the father. "What are we to do, Griselda? You know how headstrong Henry is." The marchioness sat quite still, looking at the fire, and made no immediate answer to this address.

"There is nothing for it, but that you should tell him what you think," said the mother.

"If his sister were to speak to him, it might do much," said the archdeacon. To this Mrs. Grantly said nothing; but Mrs. Grantly's daughter understood very well that her mother's confidence in her was not equal to her father's. Lady Hartletop said nothing, but still sat, with impassive face, and eyes fixed upon the fire. "I think that if you were to speak to him, Griselda, and tell him that he would disgrace his family, he would be ashamed to go on with such a marriage," said the father. "He would feel, connected as he is with Lord Hartletop——"

"I don't think he would feel anything about that," said Mrs. Grantly.

"I dare say not," said Lady Hartletop.

"I am sure he ought to feel it," said the father. They were all silent, and sat looking at the fire.

"I suppose, papa, you allow Henry an income," said Lady Hartletop, after a while.

"Indeed I do,—eight hundred a year."

"Then I think I should tell him that that must depend upon his conduct. Mamma, if you won't mind ringing the bell, I will send for Cecile, and go upstairs and dress." Then the marchioness went upstairs to dress, and in about an hour the major arrived in his dog-cart. He also was allowed to go upstairs to dress before anything was said to him about his great offence.

"Griselda is right," said the archdeacon, speaking to his wife out of his dressing-room. "She always was right. I never knew a young woman with more sense than Griselda."

"But you do not mean to say that in any event you would stop Henry's income?" Mrs. Grantly also was dressing, and made reply out of her bedroom.

"Upon my word, I don't know. As a father I would do anything to prevent such a marriage as that."

"But if he did marry her in spite of the threat? And he would if he had once said so."

"Is a father's word, then, to go for nothing; and a father who allows his son eight hundred a year? If he told the girl that he would be ruined she could n't hold him to it."

"My dear, they 'd know as well as I do, that you would give way after three months."

"But why should I give way? Good heavens!"

"Of course you 'd give way, and of course we should have the young woman here, and of course we should make the best of it."

The idea of having Grace Crawley as a daughter at the Plumstead Rectory was too much for the archdeacon, and he resented it by additional vehemence in the tone of his voice, and a nearer personal approach to the wife of his bosom. All unaccoutred as he was, he stood in the doorway between the two rooms, and thence fulminated at his wife his assurances that he would never allow himself to be immersed in such a depth of humility as that she had suggested. "I can tell you this, then, that if ever she comes here, I shall take care to be away. I will never receive her here. You can do as you please."

"That is just what I cannot do. If I could do as I pleased, I would put a stop to it at once."

"It seems to me that you want to encourage him. A child about sixteen years of age!"

"I am told she is nineteen."

"What does it matter if she was fifty-nine? Think of what her bringing up has been. Think what it would be to have all the Crawleys in our house for ever, and all their debts, and all their disgrace!"

"I do not know that they have ever been disgraced."

"You 'll see. The whole county has heard of the affair of this twenty pounds. Look at that dear girl upstairs, who has been such a comfort to us. Do you think it would be fit that she and her husband should meet such a one as Grace Crawley at our table?"

"I don't think it would do them a bit of harm," said

Mrs. Grantly. "But there would be no chance of that, seeing that Griselda's husband never comes to us."

"He was here the year before last."

"And I never was so tired of a man in all my life."

"Then you prefer the Crawleys, I suppose. This is what you get from Eleanor's teaching." Eleanor was the dean's wife, and Mrs. Grantly's younger sister. "It has always been a sorrow to me that I ever brought Arabin into the diocese."

"I never asked you to bring him, archdeacon. But nobody was so glad as you when he proposed to Eleanor."

"Well, the long and short of it is this, I shall tell Henry to-night that if he makes a fool of himself with this girl, he must not look to me any longer for an income. He has about six hundred a year of his own, and if he chooses to throw himself away, he had better go and live in the south of France, or in Canada, or where he pleases. He shan't come here."

"I hope he won't marry the girl, with all my heart," said Mrs. Grantly.

"He had better not. By heavens, he had better not!"

"But if he does you 'll be the first to forgive him."

On hearing this the archdeacon slammed the door, and retired to his washing apparatus. At the present moment he was very angry with his wife, but then she was so accustomed to such anger, and was so well aware that it in truth meant nothing, that it did not make her unhappy. The archdeacon and Mrs. Grantly had now been man and wife for more than a quarter of a century, and had never in truth quarrelled. He had the most profound respect for her judgment, and

the most implicit reliance on her conduct. She had never yet offended him, or caused him to repent the hour in which he had made her Mrs. Grantly. But she had come to understand that she might use a woman's privilege with her tongue; and she used it,—not altogether to his comfort. On the present occasion he was the more annoyed because he felt that she might be right. "It would be a positive disgrace, and I never would see him again," he said to himself. And yet, as he said it, he knew that he would not have the strength of character to carry him through a prolonged quarrel with his son. "I never would see her,—never, never!" he said to himself. "And then such an opening as he might have at his sister's house!"

Major Grantly had been a successful man in life,—with the one exception of having lost the mother of his child within a twelvemonth of his marriage and within a few hours of that child's birth. He had served in India as a very young man, and had been decorated with the Victoria Cross. Then he had married a lady with some money, and had left the active service of the army with the concurring advice of his own family and that of his wife. He had taken a small place in his father's county, but the wife for whose comfort he had taken it had died before she was permitted to see it. Nevertheless he had gone to reside there, hunting a good deal and farming a little, making himself popular in the district, and keeping up the good name of Grantly in a successful way, till—alas,—it had seemed good to him to throw those favouring eyes on poor Grace Crawley. His wife had now been dead just two years, and as he was still under thirty, no one could deny it would be right that he should marry again.

No one did deny it. His father had hinted that he ought to do so, and had generously whispered that if some little increase to the major's present income were needed, he might possibly be able to do something. "What is the good of keeping it?" the archdeacon had said in liberal after-dinner warmth. "I only want it for your brother and yourself." The brother was a clergyman.

And the major's mother had strongly advised him to marry again without loss of time. "My dear Henry," she had said, "you 'll never be younger, and youth does go for something. As for dear little Edith, being a girl, she is almost no impediment. Do you know those two girls at Chaldicotes?"

"What, Mrs. Thorne's nieces?"

"No; they are not her nieces but her cousins. Emily Dunstable is very handsome; — and as for money—!"

"But what about birth, mother?"

"One can't have everything, my dear."

"As far as I am concerned, I should like to have everything or nothing," the major had said, laughing. Now for him to think of Grace Crawley after that,—of Grace Crawley who had no money, and no particular birth, and not even beauty itself,—so at least Mrs. Grantly said,—who had not even enjoyed the ordinary education of a lady, was too bad. Nothing had been wanting to Emily Dunstable's education, and it was calculated that she would have at least twenty thousand pounds on the day of her marriage.

The disappointment to the mother would be the more sore because she had gone to work upon her little scheme with reference to Miss Emily Dunstable,

and had at first, as she thought, seen her way to success,—to success in spite of the disparaging words which her son had spoken to her. Mrs. Thorne's house at Chaldicotes,—or Dr. Thorne's house, as it should, perhaps, be more properly called, for Dr. Thorne was the husband of Mrs. Thorne,—was in these days the pleasantest house in Barsetshire. No one saw so much company as the Thornes, or spent so much money in so pleasant a way. The great county families, the Pallisers and the De Courcys, the Luftons and the Greshams, were no doubt grander, and some of them were perhaps richer than the Chaldicote Thornes,—as they were called to distinguish them from the Thornes of Ullathorne; but none of these people were so pleasant in their ways, so free in their hospitality, or so easy in their modes of living, as the doctor and his wife. When first Chaldicotes, a very old country-seat, had by the chances of war fallen into their hands and been newly furnished, and newly decorated, and newly gardened, and newly greenhoused and hot-watered by them, many of the county people had turned up their noses at them. Dear old Lady Lufton had done so, and had been greatly grieved,—saying nothing, however, of her grief,—when her son and daughter-in-law had broken away from her, and submitted themselves to the blandishments of the doctor's wife. And the Grantlys had stood aloof, partly influenced, no doubt, by their dear and intimate old friend Miss Monica Thorne of Ullathorne, a lady of the very old school, who, though good as gold and kind as charity, could not endure that an interloping Mrs. Thorne, who never had a grandfather, should come to honour and glory in the county, simply because of her riches. Miss Mon-

ica Thorne stood out, but Mrs. Grantly gave way, and having once given way found that Dr. Thorne, and Mrs. Thorne, and Emily Dunstable, and Chaldicote House together, were very charming. And the major had been once there with her, and had made himself very pleasant, and there had certainly been some little passage of incipient love between him and Miss Emily Dunstable, as to which Mrs. Thorne, who managed everything, seemed to be well pleased. This had been after the first mention made by Mrs. Grantly to her son of Emily Dunstable's name, but before she had heard any faintest whispers of his fancy for Grace Crawley; and she had therefore been justified in hoping,—almost in expecting, that Emily Dunstable would be her daughter-in-law, and was therefore the more aggrieved when this terrible Crawley peril first opened itself before her eyes.

CHAPTER III.

THE ARCHDEACON'S THREAT.

THE dinner-party at the rectory comprised none but the Grantly family. The marchioness had written to say that she preferred to have it so. The father had suggested that the Thornes of Ullathorne, very old friends, might be asked, and the Greshams from Boxall Hill, and had even promised to endeavour to get old Lady Lufton over to the rectory, Lady Lufton having in former years been Griselda's warm friend. But Lady Hartletop had preferred to see her dear father and mother in privacy. Her brother Henry she would be glad to meet, and hoped to make some arrangement with him for a short visit to Hartlebury, her husband's place in Shropshire,—as to which latter hint, it may, however, be at once said, that nothing further was spoken after the Crawley alliance had been suggested. And there had been a very sore point mooted by the daughter in a request made by her to her father that she might not be called upon to meet her grandfather, her mother's father, Mr. Harding, a clergyman of Barchester, who was now stricken in years.—"Papa would not have come," said Mrs. Grantly, "but I think,—I do think——" Then she stopped herself.

"Your father has odd ways sometimes, my dear. You know how fond I am of having him here myself."

"It does not signify," said Mrs. Grantly. "Do not let us say anything more about it. Of course we cannot have everything. I am told the child does her duty in her sphere of life, and I suppose we ought to be contented." Then Mrs. Grantly went up to her own room, and there she cried. Nothing was said to the major on the unpleasant subject of the Crawleys before dinner. He met his sister in the drawing-room, and was allowed to kiss her noble cheek. "I hope Edith is well, Henry," said the sister. "Quite well; and little Dumbello is the same, I hope?" "Thank you, yes; quite well." Then there seemed to be nothing more to be said between the two. The major never made inquiries after the august family, or would allow it to appear that he was conscious of being shone upon by the wife of a marquis. Any adulation which Griselda received of that kind came from her father, and, therefore, unconsciously she had learned to think that her father was better bred than the other members of her family, and more fitted by nature to move in that sacred circle to which she herself had been exalted. We need not dwell upon the dinner, which was but a dull affair. Mrs. Grantly strove to carry on the family party exactly as it would have been carried on had her daughter married the son of some neighbouring squire; but she herself was conscious of the struggle, and the fact of there being a struggle produced failure. The rector's servants treated the daughter of the house with special awe, and the marchioness herself moved, and spoke, and ate, and drank with a cold magnificence, which I think had become a second nature with her, but which was not on that account the less oppressive. Even the archdeacon, who enjoyed something in that

which was so disagreeable to his wife, felt a relief when he was left alone after dinner with his son. He felt relieved as his son got up to open the door for his mother and sister, but was aware at the same time that he had before him a most difficult and possibly a most disastrous task. His dear son Henry was not a man to be talked smoothly out of, or into, any propriety. He had a will of his own, and having hitherto been a successful man, who in youth had fallen into few youthful troubles,—who had never justified his father in using stern parental authority,—was not now inclined to bend his neck. "Henry," said the archdeacon, "what are you drinking? That 's '34 port, but it 's not just what it should be. Shall I send for another bottle?"

"It will do for me, sir. I shall only take a glass."

"I shall drink two or three glasses of claret. But you young fellows have become so desperately temperate."

"We take our wine at dinner, sir."

"By-the-bye, how well Griselda is looking."

"Yes, she is. It 's always easy for women to look well when they 're rich." How would Grace Crawley look, then, who was poor as poverty itself, and who should remain poor, if his son was fool enough to marry her? That was the train of thought which ran through the archdeacon's mind. "I do not think much of riches," said he, "but it is always well that a gentleman's wife or a gentleman's daughter should have a sufficiency to maintain her position in life."

"You may say the same, sir, of everybody's wife and everybody's daughter."

"You know what I mean, Henry."

"I am not quite sure that I do, sir."

"Perhaps I had better speak out at once. A rumour has reached your mother and me, which we don't believe for a moment, but which, nevertheless, makes us unhappy even as a report. They say that there is a young woman living in Silverbridge to whom you are becoming attached."

"Is there any reason why I should not become attached to a young woman in Silverbridge?—though I hope any young woman to whom I may become attached will be worthy at any rate of being called a young lady."

"I hope so, Henry; I hope so. I do hope so."

"So much I will promise, sir; but I will promise nothing more."

The archdeacon looked across into his son's face, and his heart sank within him. His son's voice and his son's eyes seemed to tell him two things. They seemed to tell him, firstly, that the rumour about Grace Crawley was true; and, secondly, that the major was resolved not to be talked out of his folly. "But you are not engaged to any one, are you?" said the archdeacon. The son did not at first make any answer, and then the father repeated the question. "Considering our mutual positions, Henry, I think you ought to tell me if you are engaged."

"I am not engaged. Had I become so, I should have taken the first opportunity of telling either you or my mother."

"Thank God. Now, my dear boy, I can speak out more plainly. The young woman whose name I have heard is daughter to that Mr. Crawley who is perpetual curate at Hogglestock. I knew that there could be nothing in it."

"But there is something in it, sir."

"What is there in it? Do not keep me in suspense. Henry. What is it you mean?"

"It is rather hard to be cross-questioned in this way on such a subject. When you express yourself as thankful that there is nothing in the rumour, I am forced to stop you, as otherwise it is possible that hereafter you may say that I have deceived you."

"But you don't mean to marry her?"

"I certainly do not mean to pledge myself not to do so."

"Do you mean to tell me, Henry, that you are in love with Miss Crawley?" Then there was another pause, during which the archdeacon sat looking for an answer; but the major said never a word. "Am I to suppose that you intend to lower yourself by marrying a young woman who cannot possibly have enjoyed any of the advantages of a lady's education? I say nothing of the imprudence of the thing; nothing of her own want of fortune; nothing of your having to maintain a whole family steeped in poverty; nothing of the debts and character of the father, upon whom, as I understand, at this moment there rests a very grave suspicion of—of—of—what I 'm afraid I must call downright theft."

"Downright theft, certainly,—if he were guilty."

"I say nothing of all that; but looking at the young woman herself—"

"She is simply the best educated girl whom it has ever been my lot to meet."

"Henry, I have a right to expect that you will be honest with me."

"I am honest with you."

"Do you mean to ask this girl to marry you?"

"I do not think that you have any right to ask me that question, sir."

"I have a right at any rate to tell you this, that if you so far disgrace yourself and me, I shall consider myself bound to withdraw from you all the sanction which would be conveyed by my—my—my continued assistance."

"Do you intend me to understand that you will stop my income?"

"Certainly I should."

"Then, sir, I think you would behave to me most cruelly. You advised me to give up my profession."

"Not in order that you might marry Grace Crawley."

"I claim the privilege of a man of my age to do as I please in such a matter as marriage. Miss Crawley is a lady. Her father is a clergyman, as is mine. Her father's oldest friend is my uncle. There is nothing on earth against her except her poverty. I do not think I ever heard of such cruelty on a father's part."

"Very well, Henry."

"I have endeavoured to do my duty by you, sir, always; and by my mother. You can treat me in this way, if you please, but it will not have any effect on my conduct. You can stop my allowance to-morrow, if you like it. I had not as yet made up my mind to make an offer to Miss Crawley, but I shall now do so to-morrow morning."

This was very bad indeed, and the archdeacon was extremely unhappy. He was by no means at heart a cruel man. He loved his children dearly. If this disagreeable marriage were to take place, he would doubtless do exactly as his wife had predicted. He would

not stop his son's income for a single quarter; and, though he went on telling himself that he would stop it, he knew in his own heart that any such severity was beyond his power. He was a generous man in money matters,—having a dislike for poverty which was not generous,—and for his own sake could not have endured to see a son of his in want. But he was terribly anxious to exercise the power which the use of the threat might give him. "Henry," he said, "you are treating me badly, very badly. My anxiety has always been for the welfare of my children. Do you think that Miss Crawley would be a fitting sister-in-law for that dear girl upstairs?"

"Certainly I do, or for any other dear girl in the world;—excepting that Griselda, who is not clever, would hardly be able to appreciate Miss Crawley, who is clever."

"Griselda not clever! Good heavens!" Then there was another pause, and as the major said nothing, the father continued his entreaties. "Pray, pray think of what my wishes are, and your mother's. You are not committed as yet. Pray think of us while there is time. I would rather double your income if I saw you marry any one that we could name here."

"I have enough as it is, if I may only be allowed to know that it will not be capriciously withdrawn." The archdeacon filled his glass unconsciously, and sipped his wine, while he thought what further he might say. Perhaps it might be better that he should say nothing further at the present moment. The major, however, was indiscreet, and pushed the question. "May I understand, sir, that your threat is withdrawn, and that my income is secure?"

"What, if you marry this girl?"

"Yes, sir; will my income be continued to me if I marry Miss Crawley?"

"No; it will not." Then the father got up hastily, pushed the decanter back angrily from his hand, and without saying another word walked away into the drawing-room. That evening at the rectory was very gloomy. The archdeacon now and again said a word or two to his daughter, and his daughter answered him in monosyllables. The major sat apart moodily, and spoke to no one. Mrs. Grantly, understanding well what had passed, knew that nothing could be done at the present moment to restore family comfort; so she sat by the fire and knitted. Exactly at ten they all went to bed.

"Dear Henry," said the mother to her son the next morning; "think much of yourself, and of your child, and of us, before you take any great step in life."

"I will, mother," said he. Then he went out and put on his wrapper, and got into his dog-cart, and drove himself off to Silverbridge. He had not spoken to his father since they were in the dining-room on the previous evening. When he started, the marchioness had not yet come downstairs; but at eleven she breakfasted, and at twelve she also was taken away. Poor Mrs. Grantly had not had much comfort from her children's visits.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CLERGYMAN'S HOUSE AT HOGGLESTOCK.

Mrs. Crawley had walked from Hogglestock to Silverbridge on the occasion of her visit to Mr. Walker, the attorney, and had been kindly sent back by that gentleman in his wife's little open carriage. The tidings she brought home with her to her husband were very grievous. The magistrates would sit on the next Thursday,—it was then Friday,—and Mr. Crawley had better appear before them to answer the charge made by Mr. Soames. He would be served with a summons, which he could obey of his own accord. There had been many points very closely discussed between Walker and Mrs. Crawley as to which there had been great difficulty in the choice of words which should be tender enough in regard to the feelings of the poor lady, and yet strong enough to convey to her the very facts as they stood. Would Mr. Crawley come, or must a policeman be sent to fetch him? The magistrates had already issued a warrant for his apprehension. Such in truth was the fact, but they had agreed with Mr. Walker, that as there was no reasonable ground for anticipating any attempt at escape on the part of the reverend gentleman, the lawyer might use what gentle means he could for ensuring the clergyman's attendance. Could Mrs. Crawley undertake to

say that he would appear? Mrs. Crawley did undertake either that her husband should appear on the Thursday, or else that she would send over in the early part of the week and declare her inability to ensure his appearance. In that case it was understood the policeman must come. Then Mr. Walker had suggested that Mr. Crawley had better employ a lawyer. Upon this Mrs. Crawley had looked beseechingly up into Mr. Walker's face, and had asked him to undertake the duty. He was of course obliged to explain that he was already employed on the other side. Mr. Soames had secured his services, and though he was willing to do all in his power to mitigate the sufferings of the family, he could not abandon the duty he had undertaken. He named another attorney, however, and then sent the poor woman home in his wife's carriage. "I fear that unfortunate man is guilty. I fear he is," Mr. Walker had said to his wife within ten minutes of the departure of the visitor.

Mrs. Crawley would not allow herself to be driven up to the garden gate before her own house, but had left the carriage some three hundred yards off, down the road, and from thence she walked home. It was now quite dark. It was nearly six in the evening on a wet December night, and although cloaks and shawls had been supplied to her, she was wet and cold when she reached her home. But at such a moment, anxious as she was to prevent the additional evil which would come to them all from illness to herself, she could not pass through to her room till she had spoken to her husband. He was sitting in the one sitting-room on the left side of the passage as the house was entered, and with him was their daughter Jane, a girl now

nearly sixteen years of age. There was no light in the room, and hardly more than a spark of fire showed itself in the grate. The father was sitting on one side of the hearth, in an old arm-chair, and there he had sat for the last hour without speaking. His daughter had been in and out of the room, and had endeavoured to gain his attention now and again by a word, but he had never answered her, and had not even noticed her presence. At the moment when Mrs. Crawley's step was heard upon the gravel which led to the door, Jane was kneeling before the fire with a hand upon her father's arm. She had tried to get her hand into his, but he had either been unaware of the attempt, or had rejected it.

"Here is mamma, at last," said Jane, rising to her feet as her mother entered the house.

"Are you all in the dark?" said Mrs. Crawley, striving to speak in a voice that should not be sorrowful.

"Yes, mamma; we are in the dark. Papa is here. Oh, mamma, how wet you are!"

"Yes, dear. It is raining. Get a light out of the kitchen, Jane, and I will go upstairs in two minutes." Then, when Jane was gone, the wife made her way in the dark over to her husband's side, and spoke a word to him. "Josiah," she said, "will you not speak to me?"

"What should I speak about? Where have you been?"

"I have been to Silverbridge. I have been to Mr. Walker. He, at any rate, is very kind."

"I do not want his kindness. I want no man's kindness. Mr. Walker is the attorney, I believe. Kind, indeed!"

"I mean considerate. Josiah, let us do the best we can in this trouble. We have had others as heavy before."

"But none to crush me as this will crush me. Well; what am I to do? Am I to go to prison—to-night?" At this moment his daughter returned with a candle, and the mother could not make her answer at once. It was a wretched, poverty-stricken room. By degrees the carpet had disappeared, which had been laid down some nine or ten years since, when they had first come to Hogglestock, and which even then had not been new. Now nothing but a poor fragment of it remained in front of the fireplace. In the middle of the room there was a table which had once been large; but one flap of it was gone altogether, and the other flap sloped grievously towards the floor, the weakness of old age having fallen into its legs. There were two or three smaller tables about, but they stood propped against walls, thence obtaining a security which their own strength would not give them. At the further end of the room there was an ancient piece of furniture, which was always called papa's "secretary," at which Mr. Crawley customarily sat and wrote his sermons, and did all work that was done by him within his house. The man who had made it, some time in the last century, had intended it to be a locked guardian for domestic documents, and the receptacle for all that was most private in the house of some paterfamilias. But beneath the hands of Mr. Crawley it always stood open; and with the exception of the small space at which he wrote, was covered with dog's-eared books, from nearly all of which the covers had disappeared. There were there two odd volumes of Euripides, a

Greek Testament, an Odyssey, a duodecimo Pindar, and a miniature Anacreon. There was half a Horace,—the two first books of the Odes at the beginning, and the De Arte Poetica at the end having disappeared. There was a little bit of a volume of Cicero, and there were Cæsar's Commentaries, in two volumes, so stoutly bound that they had defied the combined ill-usage of time and the Crawley family. All these were piled upon the secretary, with many others,—odd volumes of sermons and the like; but the Greek and Latin lay at the top, and showed signs of most frequent use. There was one arm-chair in the room,—a Windsor-chair, as such used to be called, made soft by an old cushion in the back, in which Mr. Crawley sat when both he and his wife were in the room, and Mrs. Crawley when he was absent. And there was an old horse-hair sofa,—now almost denuded of its horsehair,—but that, like the tables, required the assistance of a friendly wall. Then there was half-a-dozen of other chairs,—all of different sorts,—and they completed the furniture of the room. It was not such a room as one would wish to see inhabited by a beneficed clergyman of the Church of England; but they who know what money will do and what it will not, will understand how easily a man with a family, and with a hundred and thirty pounds a year, may be brought to the need of inhabiting such a chamber. When it is remembered that three pounds of meat a day, at ninepence a pound, will cost over forty pounds a year, there need be no difficulty in understanding that it may be so. Bread for such a family must cost at least twenty-five pounds. Clothes for five persons, of whom one must at any rate wear the raiment of a gentleman, can hardly be found

for less than ten pounds a year a head. Then there remains fifteen pounds for tea, sugar, beer, wages, education, amusements, and the like. In such circumstances a gentleman can hardly pay much for the renewal of his furniture!

Mrs. Crawley could not answer her husband's question before her daughter, and was therefore obliged to make another excuse for again sending her out of the room. "Jane, dear," she said, "bring my things down to the kitchen and I will change them by the fire. I will be there in two minutes, when I have had a word with your papa." The girl went immediately, and then Mrs. Crawley answered her husband's question. "No, my dear; there is no question of your going to prison."

"But there will be."

"I have undertaken that you shall attend before the magistrates at Silverbridge on Thursday next, at twelve o'clock. You will do that?"

"Do it! You mean, I suppose, to say that I must go there. Is anybody to come and fetch me?"

"Nobody will come. Only you must promise that you will be there. I have promised for you. You will go; will you not?" She stood leaning over him, half-embracing him, waiting for an answer; but for a while he gave none. "You will tell me that you will do what I have undertaken for you, Josiah?"

"I think I would rather that they fetched me. I think that I will not go myself."

"And have policemen come for you into the parish! Mr. Walker has promised that he will send over his phaeton. He sent me home in it to-day."

"I want nobody's phaeton. If I go I will walk. If it were ten times the distance, and though I had not

a shoe left to my feet, I would walk. If I go there at all, of my own accord, I will walk there."

"But you will go?"

"What do I care for the parish? What matters it who sees me now? I cannot be degraded worse than I am. Everybody knows it."

"There is no disgrace without guilt," said his wife.

"Everybody thinks me guilty. I see it in their eyes. The children know of it, and I hear their whispers in the school, 'Mr. Crawley has taken some money.' I heard the girl say it myself."

"What matters what the girl says?"

"And yet you would have me go in a fine carriage to Silverbridge, as though to a wedding. If I am wanted there let them take me as they would another. I shall be here for them,—unless I am dead."

At this moment Jane reappeared, pressing her mother to take off her wet clothes, and Mrs. Crawley went with her daughter to the kitchen. The one red-armed young girl who was their only servant was sent away, and then the mother and child discussed how best they might prevail with the head of the family. "But, mamma, it must come right; must it not?"

"I trust it will. I think it will. But I cannot see my way as yet."

"Papa cannot have done anything wrong."

"No, my dear; he has done nothing wrong. He has made great mistakes, and it is hard to make people understand that he has not intentionally spoken untruths. He is ever thinking of other things, about the school, and his sermons, and he does not remember."

"And about how poor we are, mamma."

"He has much to occupy his mind, and he forgets

things which dwell in the memory with other people. He said that he had got this money from Mr. Soames, and of course he thought that it was so."

"And where did he get it, mamma?"

"Ah,—I wish I knew. I should have said that I had seen every shilling that came into the house; but I know nothing of this cheque,—whence it came."

"But will not papa tell you?"

"He would tell me if he knew. He thinks it came from the dean."

"And are you sure it did not?"

"Yes; quite sure; as sure as I can be of anything. The dean told me he would give him fifty pounds, and the fifty pounds came. I had them in my own hands. And he has written to say that it was so."

"But could n't this be part of the fifty pounds?"

"No, dear, no."

"Then where did papa get it? Perhaps he picked it up, and has forgotten?"

To this Mrs. Crawley made no reply. The idea that the cheque had been found by her husband,—had been picked up as Jane had said,—had occurred also to Jane's mother. Mr. Soames was confident that he had dropped the pocket-book at the parsonage. Mrs. Crawley had always disliked Mr. Soames, thinking him to be hard, cruel, and vulgar. She would not have hesitated to believe him guilty of a falsehood, or even of direct dishonesty, if by so believing she could in her own mind have found the means of reconciling her husband's possession of the cheque with absolute truth on his part. But she could not do so. Even though Soames had, with devilish premeditated malice, slipped the cheque into her husband's pocket, his having done

so would not account for her husband's having used the cheque when he found it there. She was driven to make excuses for him which, valid as they might be with herself, could not be valid with others. He had said that Mr. Soames had paid the cheque to him. That was clearly a mistake. He had said that the cheque had been given to him by the dean. That was clearly another mistake. She knew, or thought she knew, that he, being such as he was, might make such blunders as these, and yet be true. She believed that such statements might be blunders and not falsehoods, —so convinced was she that her husband's mind would not act at all times as do the minds of other men. But having such a conviction she was driven to believe also that almost anything might be possible. Soames may have been right, or he might have dropped, not the book, but the cheque. She had no difficulty in presuming Soames to be wrong in any detail, if by so supposing she could make the exculpation of her husband easier to herself. If villany on the part of Soames was needful to her theory, Soames would become to her a villain at once,—of the blackest dye. Might it not be possible that the cheque having thus fallen into her husband's hands, he had come, after a while, to think that it had been sent to him by his friend, the dean? And if it were so, would it be possible to make others so believe? That there was some mistake which would be easily explained were her husband's mind lucid at all points, but which she could not explain because of the darkness of his mind, she was thoroughly convinced. But were she herself to put forward such a defence on her husband's part, she would, in doing so, be driven to say that he was a

lunatic,—that he was incapable of managing the affairs of himself or his family. It seemed to her that she would be compelled to have him proved to be either a thief or a madman. And yet she knew that he was neither. That he was not a thief was as clear to her as the sun at noonday. Could she have lain on the man's bosom for twenty years, and not yet have learned the secrets of the heart beneath? The whole mind of the man was, as she told herself, within her grasp. He might have taken the twenty pounds; he might have taken it and spent it, though it was not his own; but yet he was no thief. Nor was he a madman. No man more sane in preaching the gospel of his Lord, in making intelligible to the ignorant the promises of his Saviour, ever got into a parish pulpit, or taught in a parish school. The intellect of the man was as clear as running water in all things not appertaining to his daily life and its difficulties. He could be logical with a vengeance,—so logical as to cause infinite trouble to his wife, who, with all her good sense, was not logical. And he had Greek at his fingers' ends,—as his daughter knew very well. And even to this day he would sometimes recite to them English poetry, lines after lines, stanzas upon stanzas, in a sweet, low, melancholy voice, on long winter evenings when occasionally the burden of his troubles would be lighter to him than was usual. Books in Latin and in French he read with as much ease as in English, and took delight in such as came to him, when he would condescend to accept such loans from the deanery. And there was at times a lightness of heart about the man. In the course of the last winter he had translated into Greek irregular verse the very noble ballad of Lord Bateman, main-

taining the rhythm and the rhyme, and had repeated it with uncouth glee till his daughter knew it all by heart. And when there had come to him a five-pound note from some admiring magazine editor as the price of the same,—still through the dean's hands,—he had brightened up his heart, and had thought for an hour or two that even yet the world would smile upon him. His wife knew well that he was not mad; but yet she knew that there were dark moments with him, in which his mind was so much astray that he could not justly be called to account as to what he might remember and what he might forget. How would it be possible to explain all this to a judge and jury, so that they might neither say that he was dishonest, nor yet that he was mad? "Perhaps he picked it up, and had forgotten," her daughter said to her. Perhaps it was so, but she might not as yet admit as much even to her child.

"It is a mystery, dear, as yet, which, with God's aid, will be unravelled. Of one thing we at least may be sure; that your papa has not wilfully done anything wrong."

"Of course we are sure of that, mamma."

Mrs. Crawley had many troubles during the next four or five days, of which the worst, perhaps, had reference to the services of the Sunday which intervened between the day of her visit to Silverbridge, and the sitting of the magistrates. On the Saturday it was necessary that he should prepare his sermons, of which he preached two on every Sunday, though his congregation consisted only of farmers, brickmakers, and agricultural labourers who would willingly have dispensed with the second. Mrs. Crawley proposed to

send over to Mr. Robarts, a neighbouring clergyman, for the loan of a curate. Mr. Robarts was a warm friend to the Crawleys, and in such an emergency would probably have come himself; but Mr. Crawley would not hear of it. The discussion took place early on the Saturday morning, before it was as yet daylight, for the poor woman was thinking day and night of her husband's troubles, and it had this good effect, that immediately after breakfast he seated himself at his desk, and worked at his task as though he had forgotten all else in the world.

And on the Sunday morning he went into his school before the hour of the church service, as had been his wont, and taught there as though everything with him was as usual. Some of the children were absent, having heard of their teacher's tribulation, and having been told probably that he would remit his work; and for these absent ones he sent in great anger. The poor bairns came creeping in, for he was a man who by his manners had been able to secure their obedience in spite of his poverty. And he preached to the people of his parish on that Sunday, as he had always preached; eagerly, clearly, with an eloquence fitted for the hearts of such an audience. No one would have guessed from his tones and gestures and appearance on that occasion, that there was aught wrong with him,—unless there had been there some observer keen enough to perceive that the greater care which he used, and the special eagerness of his words, denoted a special frame of mind.

After that, after those church services were over, he sank again, and never roused himself till the dreaded day had come.

CHAPTER V.

WHAT THE WORLD THOUGHT ABOUT IT.

Opinion in Silverbridge, at Barchester, and throughout the county, was very much divided as to the guilt or innocence of Mr. Crawley. Up to the time of Mrs. Crawley's visit to Silverbridge, the affair had not been much discussed. To give Mr. Soames his due, he had been by no means anxious to press the matter against the clergyman; but he had been forced to go on with it. While the first cheque was missing Lord Lufton had sent him a second cheque for the money, and the loss had thus fallen upon his lordship. The cheque had of course been traced, and inquiry had of course been made as to Mr. Crawley's possession of it. When that gentleman declared that he had received it from Mr. Soames, Mr. Soames had been forced to contradict and to resent such an assertion. When Mr. Crawley had afterwards said that the money had come to him from the dean, and when the dean had shown that this also was untrue, Mr. Soames, confident as he was that he had dropped the pocket-book at Mr. Crawley's house, could not but continue the investigation. He had done so with as much silence as the nature of the work admitted. But by the day of the magistrates' meeting at Silverbridge the subject had become common through the county, and men's minds were very much divided.

All Hogglestock believed their parson to be innocent; but then all Hogglestock believed him to be mad. At Silverbridge the tradesmen with whom he had dealt, and to whom he had owed, and still owed, money, all declared him to be innocent. They knew something of the man personally, and could not believe him to be a thief. All the ladies in Silverbridge, too, were sure of his innocence. It was to them impossible that such a man should have stolen twenty pounds. "My dear," said the eldest Miss Prettyman to poor Grace Crawley, "in England, where the laws are good, no gentleman is ever made out to be guilty when he is innocent; and your papa, of course, is innocent. Therefore you should not trouble yourself." "It will break papa's heart," Grace had said, and she did trouble herself. But the gentlemen in Silverbridge were made of sterner stuff, and believed the man to be guilty, clergyman and gentleman though he was. Mr. Walker, who among the lights in Silverbridge was the leading light, would not speak a word upon the subject to anybody; and then everybody, who was anybody, knew that Mr. Walker was convinced of the man's guilt. Had Mr. Walker believed him to be innocent, his tongue would have been ready enough. John Walker, who was in the habit of laughing at his father's good-nature, had no doubt upon the subject. Mr. Winthrop, Mr. Walker's partner, shook his head. People did not think much of Mr. Winthrop, excepting certain unmarried ladies; for Mr. Winthrop was a bachelor, and had plenty of money. People did not think much of Mr. Winthrop; but still on this subject he might know something, and when he shook his head he manifestly intended to indicate guilt. And Dr.

Tempest, the rector of Silverbridge, did not hesitate to declare his belief in the guilt of the incumbent of Hogglestock. No man reverences a clergyman, as a clergyman, so slightly as a brother clergyman. To Dr. Tempest it appeared to be neither very strange nor very terrible that Mr. Crawley should have stolen twenty pounds. "What is a man to do," he said, "when he sees his children starving? He should not have married on such a preferment as that." Mr. Crawley had married, however, long before he got the living of Hogglestock.

There were two Lady Luftons,—mother-in-law and daughter-in-law,—who at this time were living together at Framley Hall, Lord Lufton's seat in the county of Barset, and they were both thoroughly convinced of Mr. Crawley's innocence. The elder lady had lived much among clergymen, and could hardly, I think, by any means have been brought to believe in the guilt of any man who had taken upon himself the orders of the Church of England. She had also known Mr. Crawley personally for some years, and was one of those who could not admit to herself that any one was vile who had been near to herself. She believed intensely in the wickedness of the outside world, of the world which was far away from herself, and of which she never saw anything; but they who were near to her, and who had even become dear to her, or who even had been respected by her, were made, as it were, saints in her imagination. They were brought into the inner circle, and could hardly be expelled. She was an old woman who thought all evil of those she did not know, and all good of those whom she did know; and as she did know Mr. Crawley, she was

quite sure he had not stolen Mr. Soames's twenty pounds. She did know Mr. Soames also; and thus there was a mystery for the unravelling of which she was very anxious. And the young Lady Lufton was equally as sure, and perhaps with better reason for such certainty. She had, in truth, known more of Mr. Crawley personally, than had any one in the county, unless it was the dean. The younger Lady Lufton, the present Lord Lufton's wife, had sojourned at one time in Mr. Crawley's house, amidst the Crawley poverty, living as they lived, and nursing Mrs. Crawley through an illness which had well-nigh been fatal to her; and the younger Lady Lufton believed in Mr. Crawley;—as Mr. Crawley also believed in her.

"It is quite impossible, my dear," the old woman said to her daughter-in-law.

"Quite impossible, my lady." The dowager was always called "my lady," both by her own daughter and by her son's wife except in the presence of their children, when she was addressed as "grandmamma." "Think how well I knew him. It 's no use talking of evidence. No evidence would make me believe it."

"Nor me; and I think it a great shame that such a report should be spread about."

"I suppose Mr. Soames could not help himself?" said the younger lady, who was not herself very fond of Mr. Soames.

"Ludovic says that he has only done what he was obliged to do." The Ludovic spoken of was Lord Lufton.

This took place in the morning; but in the evening the affair was again discussed at Framley Hall. Indeed, for some days, there was hardly any other sub-

ject held to be worthy of discussion in the county. Mr. Robarts, the clergyman of the parish and the brother of the younger Lady Lufton, was dining at the hall with his wife, and the three ladies had together expressed their perfect conviction of the falseness of the accusation. But when Lord Lufton and Mr. Robarts were together after the ladies had left them there was much less of this certainty expressed. "By Jove," said Lord Lufton, "I don't know what to think of it. I wish with all my heart that Soames had said nothing about it, and that the cheque had passed without remark."

"That was impossible. When the banker sent to Soames, he was obliged to take the matter up."

"Of course he was. But I 'm sorry that it was so. For the life of me I can't conceive how the cheque got into Crawley's hands."

"I imagine that it had been lying in the house, and that Crawley had come to think that it was his own."

"But, my dear Mark," said Lord Lufton, "excuse me if I say that that 's nonsense. What do we do when a poor man has come to think that another man's property is his own? We send him to prison for making the mistake."

"I hope they won't send Crawley to prison."

"I hope so too; but what is a jury to do?"

"You think it will go to a jury, then?"

"I do," said Lord Lufton. "I don't see how the magistrates can save themselves from committing him. It is one of those cases in which every one concerned would wish to drop it if it were only possible. But it is not possible. On the evidence, as one sees it at present, one is bound to say that it is a case for a jury."

"I believe that he is mad," said the brother parson.

"He always was, as far as I could learn," said the lord. "I never knew him, myself. You do, I think?"

"Oh, yes. I know him." And the vicar of Framley became silent and thoughtful as the memory of a certain interview between himself and Mr. Crawley came back upon his mind. At that time the waters had nearly closed over his head, and Mr. Crawley had given him some help in his way. When the gentlemen had again found the ladies, they kept their own doubts to themselves; for at Framley Hall, as at present tenanted, female voices and female influences predominated over those which came from the other sex.

At Barchester, the cathedral city of the county in which the Crawleys lived, opinion was violently against Mr. Crawley. In the city, Mrs. Proudie, the wife of the bishop, was the leader of opinion in general; and she was very strong in her belief of the man's guilt. She had known much of clergymen all her life, as it behoved a bishop's wife to do, and she had none of that mingled weakness and ignorance which taught so many ladies in Barsetshire to suppose that an ordained clergyman could not become a thief. She hated old Lady Lufton with all her heart, and old Lady Lufton hated her as warmly. Mrs. Proudie would say frequently that Lady Lufton was a conceited old idiot, and Lady Lufton would declare as frequently that Mrs. Proudie was a vulgar virago. It was known at the palace in Barchester that kindness had been shown to the Crawleys by the family at Framley Hall, and this alone would have been sufficient to make Mrs. Proudie believe that Mr. Crawley could have been

guilty of any crime. And as Mrs. Proudie believed, so did the bishop believe. "It is a terrible disgrace to the diocese," said the bishop, shaking his head, and patting his apron as he sat by his study fire.

"Fiddlestick!" said Mrs. Proudie.

"But, my dear,—a beneficed clergyman!"

"You must get rid of him; that 's all. You must be firm whether he be acquitted or convicted."

"But if he be acquitted, I cannot get rid of him, my dear."

"Yes, you can, if you are firm. And you must be firm. Is it not true that he has been disgracefully involved in debt ever since he has been there; that you have been pestered by letters from unfortunate tradesmen who cannot get their money from him?"

"That is true, my dear, certainly."

"And is that kind of thing to go on? He cannot come to the palace as all clergymen should do, because he has got no clothes to come in. I saw him once about the lanes, and I never set my eyes on such an object in my life! I would not believe that the man was a clergyman till John told me. He is a disgrace to the diocese, and he must be got rid of. I feel sure of his guilt, and I hope he will be convicted. But if he escape conviction, you must sequestrate the living because of the debts. The income is enough to get an excellent curate. It would just do for Thumble." To all of which the bishop made no further reply, but simply nodded his head and patted his apron. He knew that he could not do exactly what his wife required of him; but if it should so turn out that poor Crawley was found to be guilty, then the matter would be comparatively easy.

"It should be an example to us, that we should look to our own steps, my dear," said the bishop.

"That 's all very well," said Mrs. Proudie, "but it has become your duty, and mine too, to look to the steps of other people; and that duty we must do."

"Of course, my dear; of course." That was the tone in which the question of Mr. Crawley's alleged guilt was discussed at the palace.

We have already heard what was said on the subject at the house of Archdeacon Grantly. As the days passed by, and as other tidings came in, confirmatory of those which had before reached him, the archdeacon felt himself unable not to believe in the man's guilt. And the fear which he entertained as to his son's intended marriage with Grace Crawley tended to increase the strength of his belief. Dr. Grantly had been a very successful man of the world, and on all ordinary occasions had been able to show that bold front with which success endows a man. But he still had his moments of weakness, and feared greatly lest anything of misfortune should touch him, and mar the comely roundness of his prosperity. He was very wealthy. The wife of his bosom had been to him all that a wife should be. His reputation in the clerical world stood very high. He had lived all his life on terms of equality with the best of the gentry around him. His only daughter had made a splendid marriage. His two sons had hitherto done well in the world, not only as regarded their happiness, but as to marriage also, and as to social standing. But how great would be the fall if his son should at last marry the daughter of a convicted thief! How would the Proudies rejoice over him,—the Proudies who had been crushed to the

ground by the success of the Hartletop alliance; and how would the low-church curates who swarmed in Barsetshire, gather together and scream in delight over his dismay! "But why should we say that he is guilty?" said Mrs. Grantly.

"It hardly matters, as far as we are concerned, whether they find him guilty or not," said the archdeacon. "If Henry marries that girl my heart will be broken."

But perhaps to no one except to the Crawleys themselves had the matter caused so much terrible anxiety as to the archdeacon's son. He had told his father that he had made no offer of marriage to Grace Crawley, and he had told the truth. But there are perhaps few men who make such offers in direct terms without having already said and done that which makes such offers simply necessary as the final closing of an accepted bargain. It was so at any rate between Major Grantly and Miss Crawley, and Major Grantly acknowledged to himself that it was so. He acknowledged also to himself that as regarded Grace herself he had no wish to get back from his implied intentions. Nothing that either his father or mother might say would shake him in that. But could it be his duty to bind himself to the family of a convicted thief? Could it be right that he should disgrace his father and his mother and his sister and his one child by such a connection? He had a man's heart, and the poverty of the Crawleys caused him no solicitude. But he shrank from the contamination of a prison.

CHAPTER VI.

GRACE CRAWLEY.

It has already been said that Grace Crawley was at this time living with the two Miss Prettymans, who kept a girls' school at Silverbridge. Two more benignant ladies than the Miss Prettymans never presided over such an establishment. The younger was fat, and fresh, and fair, and seemed to be always running over with the milk of human kindness. The other was very thin and very small, and somewhat afflicted with bad health;—was weak, too, in the eyes, and subject to racking headaches, so that it was considered generally that she was unable to take much active part in the education of the pupils. But it was considered as generally that she did all the thinking, that she knew more than any other woman in Barsetshire, and that all the Prettyman schemes for education emanated from her mind. It was said, too, by those who knew them best, that her sister's good-nature was as nothing to hers; that she was the most charitable, the most loving, and the most conscientious of schoolmistresses. This was Miss Annabella Prettyman, the elder; and perhaps it may be inferred that some portion of her great character for virtue may have been due to the fact that nobody ever saw her out of her own house. She could not even go to church because the open

air brought on neuralgia. She was therefore perhaps taken to be magnificent, partly because she was unknown. Miss Anne Prettyman, the younger, went about frequently to tea-parties,—would go, indeed, to any party to which she might be invited; and was known to have a pleasant taste for pound-cake and sweetmeats. Being seen so much in the outer world, she became common, and her character did not stand so high as did that of her sister. Some people were ill-natured enough to say that she wanted to marry Mr. Winthrop; but of what maiden lady that goes out into the world are not such stories told? And all such stories in Silverbridge were told with special reference to Mr. Winthrop.

Miss Crawley, at present, lived with the Miss Prettymans and assisted them in the school. This arrangement had been going on for the last twelve months, since the time in which Grace would have left the school in the natural course of things. There had been no bargain made, and no intention that Grace should stay. She had been invited to fill the place of an absent superintendent, first for one month, then for another, and then for two more months; and when the assistant came back, the Miss Prettymans thought there were reasons why Grace should be asked to remain a little longer. But they took great care to let the fashionable world of Silverbridge know that Grace Crawley was a visitor with them, and not a teacher. "We pay her no salary, or anything of that kind," said Miss Anne Prettyman; a statement, however, which was by no means true, for during those four months the regular stipend had been paid to her; and twice since then, Miss Annabella Prettyman, who managed all the money

matters, had called Grace into her little room, and had made a little speech, and had put a little bit of paper into her hand. "I know I ought not to take it," Grace had said to her friend Anne. "If I was not here, there would be no one in my place." "Nonsense, my dear," Anne Prettyman had said; "it is the greatest comfort to us in the world. And you should make yourself nice, you know, for his sake. All the gentlemen like it." Then Grace had been very angry and had sworn that she would give the money back again. Nevertheless, I think she did make herself as nice as she knew how to do. And from all this it may be seen that the Miss Prettymans had hitherto quite approved of Major Grantly's attentions.

But when this terrible affair came on about the cheque which had been lost and found and traced to Mr. Crawley's hands, Miss Anne Prettyman said nothing further to Grace Crawley about Major Grantly. It was not that she thought that Mr. Crawley was guilty, but she knew enough of the world to be aware that suspicion of such guilt might compel such a man as Major Grantly to change his mind. "If he had only popped," Anne said to her sister, "it would have been all right. He would never have gone back from his word." "My dear," said Annabella, "I wish you would not talk about popping. It is a terrible word." "I shouldn't, to any one except you," said Anne.

There had come to Silverbridge some few months since, on a visit to Mrs. Walker, a young lady from Allington, in the neighbouring county, between whom and Grace Crawley there had grown up from circumstances a warm friendship. Grace had a cousin in London,—a clerk high up and well-to-do in a public

office, a nephew of her mother's,—and this cousin was, and for years had been, violently smitten in love for this young lady. But the young lady's tale had been sad, and though she acknowledged feelings of most affectionate friendship for the cousin, she could not bring herself to acknowledge more. Grace Crawley had met the young lady at Silverbridge, and words had been spoken about the cousin; and though the young lady from Allington was some years older than Grace, there had grown up to be a friendship, and, as is not uncommon between young ladies, there had been an agreement that they would correspond. The name of the lady was Miss Lily Dale, and the name of the well-to-do cousin in London was Mr. John Eames.

At the present moment Miss Dale was at home with her mother at Allington, and Grace Crawley in her terrible sorrow wrote to her friend, pouring out her whole heart. As Grace's letter and Miss Dale's answer will assist us in our story, I will venture to give them both.

"Silverbridge, December, 186–.

"Dearest Lily,—I hardly know how to tell you what has happened, it is so very terrible. But perhaps you will have heard it already, as everybody is talking of it here. It has got into the newspapers, and therefore it cannot be kept secret. Not that I should keep anything from you; only this is so very dreadful that I hardly know how to write it. Somebody says,—a Mr. Soames, I believe it is,—that papa has taken some money that does not belong to him, and he is to be brought before the magistrates and tried. Of course papa has done nothing wrong. I do think he would be the last man in the world to take a penny that did

not belong to him. You know how poor he is; what a life he has had! But I think he would almost sooner see mamma starving;—I am sure he would rather be starved himself, than even borrow a shilling which he could not pay. To suppose that he would take money" (she had tried to write the word "steal," but she could not bring her pen to form the letters) "is monstrous. But, somehow, the circumstances have been made to look bad against him, and they say that he must come over here to the magistrates. I often think that of all men in the world papa is the most unfortunate. Everything seems to go against him, and yet he is so good! Poor mamma has been over here, and she is distracted. I never saw her so wretched before. She had been to your friend, Mr. Walker, and came to me afterwards for a minute. Mr. Walker has got something to do with it, though mamma says she thinks he is quite friendly to papa. I wonder whether you could find out, through Mr. Walker, what he thinks about it. Of course mamma knows that papa has done nothing wrong; but she says that the whole thing is most mysterious, and that she does not know how to account for the money. Papa, you know, is not like other people. He forgets things; and is always thinking, thinking, thinking of his great misfortunes. Poor papa! My heart bleeds so when I remember all his sorrows, that I hate myself for thinking about myself.

"When mamma left me,—and it was then I first knew that papa would really have to be tried,—I went to Miss Annabella, and told her that I would go home. She asked me why, and I said I would not disgrace her house by staying in it. She got up and took me

in her arms, and there came a tear out of both her dear old eyes, and she said that if anything evil came to papa,—which she would not believe, as she knew him to be a good man,—there should be a home in her house not only for me, but for mamma and Jane. Is n't she a wonderful woman? When I think of her, I sometimes think that she must be an angel already. Then she became very serious,—for just before, through her tears, she had tried to smile,—and she told me to remember that all people could not be like her, who had nobody to look to but herself and her sister; and that at present I must task myself not to think of that which I had been thinking of before. She did not mention anybody's name, but of course I understood very well what she meant; and I suppose she is right. I said nothing in answer to her, for I could not speak. She was holding my hand, and I took hers up and kissed it, to show her, if I could, that I knew that she was right; but I could not have spoken about it for all the world. It was not ten days since that she herself, with all her prudence, told me that she thought I ought to make up my mind what answer I would give him. And then I did not say anything; but of course she knew. And after that Miss Anne spoke quite freely about it, so that I had to beg her to be silent even before the girls. You know how imprudent she is. But it is all over now. Of course Miss Annabella is right. He has got a great many people to think of; his father and mother, and his darling little Edith, whom he brought here twice, and left her with us once for two days, so that she got to know me quite well; and I took such a love for her, that I could not bear to part with her. But I think sometimes that all

our family are born to be unfortunate, and then I tell myself that I will never hope for anything again.

"Pray write to me soon. I feel as though nothing on earth could comfort me, and yet I shall like to have your letter. Dear, dear Lily, I am not even yet so wretched but what I shall rejoice to be told good news of you. If it only could be as John wishes it! And why should it not? It seems to me that nobody has a right or a reason to be unhappy except us. Good-bye, dearest Lily.

"Your affectionate friend,

"GRACE CRAWLEY."

"P.S.—I think I have made up my mind that I will go back to Hogglestock at once if the magistrates decide against papa. I think I should be doing the school harm if I were to stay here."

The answer to this letter did not reach Miss Crawley till after the magistrates' meeting on Thursday, but it will be better for our story that it should be given here than postponed until the result of that meeting shall have been told. Miss Dale's answer was as follows:—

"Allington, December, 186–.

"Dear Grace,—Your letter has made me very unhappy. If it can at all comfort you to know that mamma and I sympathise with you altogether, of that you may at any rate be sure. But in such troubles nothing will give comfort. They must be borne till the fire of misfortune burns itself out.

"I had heard about the affair a day or two before I got your note. Our clergyman, Mr. Boyce, told us of it. Of course we all know that the charge must be

altogether unfounded, and mamma says that the truth will be sure to show itself at last. But that conviction does not cure the evil, and I can well understand that your father should suffer grievously; and I pity your mother quite as much as I do him.

"As for Major Grantly, if he be such a man as I took him to be from the little I saw of him, all this would make no difference to him. I am sure that it ought to make none. Whether it should not make a difference in you is another question. I think it should; and I think your answer to him should be that you could not even consider any such proposition while your father was in so great trouble. I am so much older than you, and seem to have had so much experience, that I do not scruple, as you will see, to come down upon you with all the weight of my wisdom.

"About that other subject I had rather say nothing. I have known your cousin all my life, almost; and I regard no one more kindly than I do him. When I think of my friends, he is always one of the dearest. But when one thinks of going beyond friendship, even if one tries to do so, there are so many barriers!

"Your affectionate friend,

"LILY DALE.

"Mamma bids me say that she would be delighted to have you here whenever it might suit you to come; and I add to this message my entreaty that you will come at once. You say that you think you ought to leave Miss Prettyman's for a while. I can well understand your feeling; but as your sister is with your mother, surely you had better come to us,—I mean quite at once. I will not scruple to tell you what

mamma says, because I know your good sense. She says that as the interest of the school may possibly be concerned, and as you have no regular engagement, she thinks you ought to leave Silverbridge; but she says that it will be better that you come to us than that you should go home. If you went home, people might say that you had left in some sort of disgrace. Come to us, and when all this has been put right, then you go back to Silverbridge; and then, if a certain person speaks again, you can make a different answer. Mamma quite understands that you are to come; so you have only got to ask your own mamma, and come at once."

This letter, as the reader will understand, did not reach Grace Crawley till after the all-important Thursday; but before that day had come round, Grace had told Miss Prettyman,—had told both the Miss Prettymans,—that she was resolved to leave them. She had done this without even consulting her mother, driven to it by various motives. She knew that her father's conduct was being discussed by the girls in the school, and that things were said of him which it could not but be for the disadvantage of Miss Prettyman that any one should say of a teacher in her establishment. She felt, too, that she could not hold up her head in Silverbridge in these days, as it would become her to do if she retained her position. She did struggle gallantly, and succeeded much more nearly than she was herself aware. She was all but able to carry herself as though no terrible accusation was being made against her father. Of the struggle, however, she was not herself the less conscious, and she told herself that on

that account also she must go. And then she must go also because of Major Grantly. Whether he was minded to come and speak to her that one other needed word, or whether he was not so minded, it would be better that she should be away from Silverbridge. If he spoke it she could only answer him by a negative; and if he were minded not to speak it, would it not be better that she should leave herself the power of thinking that his silence had been caused by her absence, and not by his coldness or indifference?

She asked, therefore, for an interview with Miss Prettyman, and was shown into the elder sister's room, at eleven o'clock on the Tuesday morning. The elder Miss Prettyman never came into the school herself till twelve, but was in the habit of having interviews with the young ladies,—which were sometimes very awful in their nature,—for the two previous hours. During these interviews an immense amount of business was done, and the fortunes in life of some girls were said to have been there made or marred; as when, for instance, Miss Crimpton had been advised to stay at home with her uncle in England, instead of going out with her sisters to India, both of which sisters were married within three months of their landing at Bombay. The way in which she gave her counsel on such occasions was very efficacious. No one knew better than Miss Prettyman that a cock can crow most effectively in his own farm-yard, and therefore all crowing intended to be effective was done by her within the shrine of her own peculiar room.

"Well, my dear, what is it?" she said to Grace. "Sit in the arm-chair, my dear, and we can then talk comfortably." The teachers, when they were closeted

with Miss Prettyman, were always asked to sit in the arm-chair, whereas a small, straight-backed, uneasy chair was kept for the use of the young ladies. And there was, too, a stool of repentance, out against the wall, very uncomfortable indeed for young ladies who had not behaved themselves so prettily as young ladies generally do.

Grace seated herself, and then began her speech very quickly. "Miss Prettyman," she said, "I have made up my mind that I will go home, if you please."

"And why should you go home, Grace? Did I not tell you that you should have a home here?" Miss Prettyman had weak eyes, and was very small, and had never possessed any claim to be called good-looking. And she assumed nothing of majestical awe from any adornment or studied amplification of the outward woman by means of impressive trappings. The possessor of an unobservant eye might have called her a mean-looking little old woman. And certainly there would have been nothing awful in her to any one who came across her otherwise than as a lady having authority in her own school. But within her own precincts, she did know how to surround herself with a dignity which all felt who approached her there. Grace Crawley, as she heard the simple question which Miss Prettyman had asked, unconsciously acknowledged the strength of the woman's manner. She already stood rebuked for having proposed a plan so ungracious, so unnecessary, and so unwise.

"I think I ought to be with mamma at present," said Grace.

"Your mother has your sister with her."

"Yes, Miss Prettyman; Jane is there."

"If there be no other reason, I cannot think that that can be held to be a reason now. Of course your mother would like to have you always; unless you should be married,—but then there are reasons why this should not be so."

"Of course there are."

"I do not think,—that is, if I know all that there is to be known,—I do not think, I say, that there can be any good ground for your leaving us now,—just now."

Then Grace sat silent for a moment, gathering her courage, and collecting her words; and after that she spoke. "It is because of papa, and because of this charge——"

"But, Grace——"

"I know what you are going to say, Miss Prettyman;—that is, I think I know."

"If you will hear me, you may be sure that you know."

"But I want you to hear me for one moment first. I beg your pardon, Miss Prettyman; I do indeed, but I want to say this before you go on. I must go home, and I know I ought. We are all disgraced, and I won't stop here to disgrace the school. I know papa has done nothing wrong; but nevertheless we are disgraced. The police are to bring him in here on Thursday, and everybody in Silverbridge will know it. It cannot be right that I should be here teaching in the school, while it is all going on;—and I won't. And, Miss Prettyman, I could n't do it,—indeed I could n't. I can't bring myself to think of anything I am doing. Indeed I can't; and then, Miss Prettyman, there are other reasons." By the time she had proceeded thus

far, Grace Crawley's words were nearly choked by her tears.

"And what are the other reasons, Grace?"

"I don't know," said Grace, struggling to speak through her tears.

"But I know," said Miss Prettyman. "I know them all. I know all your reasons, and I tell you that in my opinion you ought to remain where you are, and not go away. The very reasons which to you are reasons for your going, to me are reasons for your remaining here."

"I can't remain. I am determined to go. I don't mind you and Miss Anne, but I can't bear to have the girls looking at me, and the servants."

Then Miss Prettyman paused awhile, thinking what words of wisdom would be most appropriate in the present conjuncture. But words of wisdom did not seem to come easily to her, having for the moment been banished by tenderness of heart. "Come here, my love," she said at last. "Come here, Grace." Slowly Grace got up from her seat and came round, and stood by Miss Prettyman's elbow. Miss Prettyman pushed her chair a little back, and pushed herself a little forward, and stretching out one hand, placed her arm round Grace's waist, and with the other took hold of Grace's hand, and thus drew her down and kissed the girl's forehead and lips. And then Grace found herself kneeling at her friend's feet. "Grace," she said, "do you not know that I love you? Do you not know that I love you dearly?" In answer to this, Grace kissed the withered hand she held in hers, while the warm tears trickled down upon Miss Prettyman's knuckles. "I love you as though you were my own,"

exclaimed the schoolmistress; "and will you not trust me, that I know what is best for you?"

"I must go home," said Grace.

"Of course you shall, if you think it right at last; but let us talk of it. No one in this house, you know, has the slightest suspicion that your father has done anything that is in the least dishonourable."

"I know that you have not."

"No, nor has Anne." Miss Prettyman said this as though no one in that house beyond herself and her sister had a right to have any opinion on any subject.

"I know that," said Grace.

"Well, my dear. If we think so——"

"But the servants, Miss Prettyman?"

"If any servant in this house says a word to offend you, I 'll—I 'll——"

"They don't say anything, Miss Prettyman, but they look. Indeed I 'd better go home. Indeed I had!"

"Do not you think your mother has cares enough upon her, and burden enough, without having another mouth to feed, and another head to shelter? You have n't thought of that, Grace!"

"Yes, I have."

"And as for the work, whilst you are not quite well you shall not be troubled with teaching. I have some old papers that want copying and settling, and you shall sit here and do that just for an employment. Anne knows that I 've long wanted to have it done, and I 'll tell her that you 've kindly promised to do it for me."

"No; no; no," said Grace; "I must go home." She was still kneeling at Miss Prettyman's knee, and still holding Miss Prettyman's hand. And then, at

that moment, there came a tap at the door, gentle but yet not humble, a tap which acknowledged, on the part of the tapper, the supremacy in that room of the lady who was sitting there, but which still claimed admittance almost as a right. The tap was well known by both of them to be the tap of Miss Anne. Grace immediately jumped up, and Miss Prettyman settled herself in her chair with a motion which almost seemed to indicate some feeling of shame as to her late position.

"I suppose I may come in?" said Miss Anne, opening the door and inserting her head.

"Yes, you may come in,—if you have anything to say," said Miss Prettyman, with an air which seemed to be intended to assert her supremacy. But, in truth, she was simply collecting the wisdom and dignity which had been somewhat dissipated by her tenderness.

"I did not know that Grace Crawley was here," said Miss Anne.

"Grace Crawley is here," said Miss Prettyman.

"What is the matter, Grace?" said Miss Anne, seeing the tears.

"Never mind now," said Miss Prettyman.

"Poor dear, I 'm sure I 'm sorry as though she were my own sister," said Anne. "But, Annabella, I want to speak to you especially."

"To me, in private?"

"Yes, to you; in private, if Grace won't mind."

Then Grace prepared to go. But as she was going, Miss Anne, upon whose brow a heavy burden of thought was lying, stopped her suddenly. "Grace, my dear," she said, "go upstairs into your room, will you? —not across the hall to the school."

"And why should n't she go to the school?" said Miss Prettyman.

Miss Anne paused a moment, and then answered,—unwillingly, as though driven to make a reply which she knew to be indiscreet. "Because there is somebody in the hall."

"Go to your room, dear," said Miss Prettyman. And Grace went to her room, never turning an eye down towards the hall. "Who is it?" said Miss Prettyman.

"Major Grantly is here, asking to see you," said Miss Anne.

CHAPTER VII.

MISS PRETTYMAN'S PRIVATE ROOM.

Major Grantly, when threatened by his father with pecuniary punishment, should he demean himself by such a marriage as that he had proposed to himself, had declared that he would offer his hand to Miss Crawley on the next morning. This, however, he had not done. He had not done it, partly because he did not quite believe his father's threat, and partly because he felt that that threat was almost justified,—for the present moment,—by the circumstances in which Grace Crawley's father had placed himself. Henry Grantly acknowledged, as he drove himself home on the morning after his dinner at the rectory, that in this matter of his marriage he did owe much to his family. Should he marry at all, he owed it to them to marry a lady. And Grace Crawley,—so he told himself,—was a lady. And he owed it to them to bring among them as his wife a woman who should not disgrace him or them by her education, manners, or even by her personal appearance. In all these respects Grace Crawley was, in his judgment, quite as good as they had a right to expect her to be, and in some respects a great deal superior to that type of womanhood with which they had been most generally conversant. "If everybody had her due, my sister is n't fit to hold a candle to her," he said to himself. It must be acknowledged, there-

fore, that he was really in love with Grace Crawley. And he declared to himself, over and over again, that his family had no right to demand that he should marry a woman with money. The archdeacon's son by no means despised money. How could he, having come forth as a bird fledged from such a nest as the rectory at Plumstead Episcopi? Before he had been brought by his better nature and true judgment to see that Grace Crawley was the greater woman of the two, he had nearly submitted himself to the twenty thousand pounds of Miss Emily Dunstable,—to that, and her good-humour and rosy freshness combined. But he regarded himself as the well-to-do son of a very rich father. His only child was amply provided for; and he felt that, as regarded money, he had a right to do as he pleased. He felt this with double strength after his father's threat.

But he had no right to make a marriage by which his family would be disgraced. Whether he was right or wrong in supposing that he would disgrace his family were he to marry the daughter of a convicted thief, it is hardly necessary to discuss here. He told himself that it would be so,—telling himself also that, by the stern laws of the world, the son and the daughter must pay for the offence of the father and the mother. Even among the poor, who would willingly marry the child of a man who had been hanged? But he carried the argument beyond this, thinking much of the matter, and endeavouring to think of it not only justly, but generously. If the accusation against Crawley were false,—if the man were being injured by an unjust charge,—even if he, Grantly, could make himself think that the girl's father had not stolen the money,

then he would dare everything and go on. I do not know that his argument was good, or that his mind was logical in the matter. He ought to have felt that his own judgment as to the man's guilt was less likely to be correct than that of those whose duty it was and would be to form and to express a judgment on the matter; and as to Grace herself, she was equally innocent whether her father were guilty or not guilty. If he were to be debarred from asking her for her hand by his feelings for his father and mother, he should hardly have trusted to his own skill in ascertaining the real truth as to the alleged theft. But he was not logical, and thus, meaning to be generous, he became unjust.

He found that among those in Silverbridge whom he presumed to be best informed on such matters, there was a growing opinion that Mr. Crawley had stolen the money. He was intimate with all the Walkers, and was able to find out that Mrs. Walker knew that her husband believed in the clergyman's guilt. He was by no means alone in his willingness to accept Mr. Walker's opinion as the true opinion. Silverbridge, generally, was endeavouring to dress itself in Mr. Walker's glass, and to believe as Mr. Walker believed. The ladies of Silverbridge, including the Miss Prettymans, were aware that Mr. Walker had been very kind both to Mr. and Mrs. Crawley, and argued from this that Mr. Walker must think the man to be innocent. But Henry Grantly, who did not dare to ask a direct question of the solicitor, went cunningly to work, and closeted himself with Mrs. Walker,—with Mrs. Walker, who knew well of the good fortune which was hovering over Grace's head and was so nearly settling itself upon

her shoulders. She would have given a finger to be able to whitewash Mr. Crawley in the major's estimation. Nor must it be supposed that she told the major in plain words that her husband had convinced himself of the man's guilt. In plain words no question was asked between them, and in plain words no opinion was expressed. But there was the look of sorrow in the woman's eye, there was the absence of reference to her husband's assurance that the man was innocent, there was the air of settled grief which told of her own conviction;—and the major left her, convinced that Mrs. Walker believed Mr. Crawley to be guilty.

Then he went to Barchester; not open-mouthed with inquiry, but rather with open ears, and it seemed to him that all men in Barchester were of one mind. There was a county-club in Barchester, and at this county-club nine men out of every ten were talking about Mr. Crawley. It was by no means necessary that a man should ask questions on the subject. Opinion was expressed so freely that no such asking was required; and opinion in Barchester,—at any rate in the county-club,—seemed now to be all of one mind. There had been every disposition at first to believe Mr. Crawley to be innocent. He had been believed to be innocent, even after he had said wrongly that the cheque had been paid to him by Mr. Soames; but he had since stated that he had received it from Dean Arabin, and that statement was also shown to be false. A man who has a cheque changed on his own behalf is bound at least to show where he got the cheque. Mr. Crawley had not only failed to do this, but had given two false excuses. Henry Grantly, as he drove home to Silverbridge on the Sunday afternoon, summed

up all the evidence in his own mind, and brought in a verdict of Guilty against the father of the girl whom he loved.

On the following morning he walked into Silverbridge and called at Miss Prettyman's house. As he went along his heart was warmer towards Grace than it had ever been before. He had told himself that he was now bound to abstain, for his father's sake, from doing that which he had told his father that he would certainly do. But he knew also, that he had said that which, though it did not bind him to Miss Crawley, gave her a right to expect that he would so bind himself. And Miss Prettyman could not but be aware of what his intention had been, and could not but expect that he should now be explicit. Had he been a wise man altogether, he would probably have abstained from saying anything at the present moment,—a wise man, that is, in the ways and feelings of the world in such matters. But, as there are men who will allow themselves all imaginable latitude in their treatment of women, believing that the world will condone any amount of fault of that nature, so are there other men, and a class of men which on the whole is the more numerous of the two, who are tremblingly alive to the danger of censure on this head,—and to the danger of censure not only from others, but from themselves also. Major Grantly had done that which made him think it imperative upon him to do something further, and to do that something at once.

Therefore he started off on the Monday morning after breakfast and walked to Silverbridge, and as he walked he built various castles in the air. Why should he not marry Grace,—if she would have him,—and

take her away beyond the reach of her father's calamity? Why should he not throw over his own people altogether, money, position, society, and all, and give himself up to love? Were he to do so, men might say that he was foolish, but no one could hint that he was dishonourable. His spirit was high enough to teach him to think that such conduct on his part would have in it something of magnificence; but, yet, such was not his purpose. In going to Miss Prettyman it was his intention to apologise for not doing this magnificent thing. His mind was quite made up. Nevertheless he built those castles in the air.

It so happened that he encountered the younger Miss Prettyman in the hall. It would not at all have suited him to reveal to her the purport of his visit, or ask her either to assist his suit or to receive his apologies. Miss Anne Prettyman was too common a personage in the Silverbridge world to be fit for such employment. Miss Anne Prettyman was, indeed, herself submissive to him, and treated him with the courtesy which is due to a superior being. He therefore simply asked her whether he could be allowed to see her sister.

"Surely, Major Grantly;—that is, I think so. It is a little early, but I think she can receive you."

"It is early, I know; but as I want to say a word or two on business——"

"Oh, on business. I am sure she will see you on business; she will only be too proud. If you will be kind enough to step in here for two minutes." Then Miss Anne, having deposited the major in the little parlour, ran upstairs with her message to her sister. "Of course it 's about Grace Crawley," she said to herself as she went. "It can't be about anything else.

I wonder what it is he 's going to say. If he 's going to pop, and the father in all this trouble, he 's the finest fellow that ever trod." Such were her thoughts as she tapped at the door and announced in the presence of Grace that there was somebody in the hall.

"It 's Major Grantly," whispered Anne, as soon as Grace had shut the door behind her.

"So I supposed by your telling her not to go into the hall. What has he come to say?"

"How on earth can I tell you that, Annabella? But I suppose he can have only one thing to say after all that has come and gone. He can only have come with one object."

"He would n't have come to me for that. He would have asked to see herself."

"But she never goes out now, and he can't see her."

"Or he would have gone to them over at Hogglestock," said Miss Prettyman. "But of course he must come up now he is here. Would you mind telling him;—or shall I ring the bell?"

"I 'll tell him. We need not make more fuss than necessary, with the servants, you know. I suppose I 'd better not come back with him?"

There was a tone of supplication in the younger sister's voice as she made the last suggestion, which ought to have melted the heart of the elder; but it was unavailing. "As he has asked to see me, I think you had better not," said Annabella. Miss Anne Prettyman bore her cross meekly, offered no argument on the subject, and returning to the little parlour where she had left the major, brought him upstairs and ushered him into her sister's room without even entering it again, herself.

Major Grantly was as intimately acquainted with Miss Anne Prettyman as a man under thirty may well be with a lady nearer fifty than forty, who is not specially connected with him by any family tie; but of Miss Prettyman he knew personally very much less. Miss Prettyman, as has before been said, did not go out, and was therefore not common to the eyes of the Silverbridgians. She did occasionally see her friends in her own house, and Grace Crawley's lover, as the major had come to be called, had been there on more than one occasion; but of real personal intimacy between them there had hitherto existed none. He might have spoken, perhaps, a dozen words to her in his life. He had now more than a dozen to speak to her, but he hardly knew how to commence them.

She had got up and curtseyed, and had then taken his hand and asked him to sit down. "My sister tells me that you want to see me," she said, in her softest, mildest voice.

"I do, Miss Prettyman. I want to speak to you about a matter that troubles me very much,—very much indeed."

"Anything that I can do, Major Grantly——"

"Thank you, yes. I know that you are very good, or I should not have ventured to come to you. Indeed I should n't trouble you now, of course, if it was only about myself. I know very well what a great friend you are to Miss Crawley."

"Yes, I am. We love Grace dearly here."

"So do I," said the major, bluntly; "I love her dearly, too." Then he paused, as though he thought that Miss Prettyman ought to take up the speech. But Miss Prettyman seemed to think differently, and

he was obliged to go on. "I don't know whether you have ever heard about it, or noticed it, or—or—or——" He felt that he was very awkward, and he blushed. Major as he was, he blushed as he sat before the old woman, trying to tell his story, but not knowing how to tell it. "The truth is, Miss Prettyman, I have done all but ask her to be my wife, and now has come this terrible affair about her father."

"It is a terrible affair, Major Grantly;—very terrible."

"By Jove, you may say that!"

"Of course Mr. Crawley is as innocent in the matter as you or I are."

"You think so, Miss Prettyman?"

"Think so! I feel quite sure of it. What, a clergyman of the Church of England, a pious, hard-working country clergyman, whom we have known among us by his good works for years, suddenly turn thief, and pilfer a few pounds! It is not possible, Major Grantly. And the father of such a daughter, too! It is not possible. It may do for men of business to think so, lawyers and such like, who are obliged to think in accordance with the evidence, as they call it; but to my mind the idea is monstrous. I don't know how he got it, and I don't care; but I 'm quite sure he did not steal it. Who ever heard of anybody becoming so base as that all at once?"

The major was startled by her eloquence, and by the indignant tone of voice in which it was expressed. It seemed to tell him that she would give him no sympathy in that which he had come to say to her, and that she was prepared to upbraid him already in that he was not prepared to do the magnificent thing of

which he had thought when he had been building his castles in the air. Why should he not do the magnificent thing? Miss Prettyman's eloquence was so strong that it half convinced him that the Barchester Club and Mr. Walker had come to a wrong conclusion after all.

"And how does Miss Crawley bear it?" he asked, desirous of postponing for a while any declaration of his own purpose.

"She is very unhappy, of course. Not that she thinks evil of her father."

"Of course she does not think him guilty?"

"Nobody thinks him so in this house, Major Grantly," said the little woman, very imperiously. "But Grace is, naturally enough, very sad;—very sad indeed. I do not think I can ask you to see her today."

"I was not thinking of it," said the major.

"Poor, dear girl! it is a great trial for her. Do you wish me to give her any message, Major Grantly?"

The moment had now come in which he must say that which he had come to say. The little woman waited for an answer, and as he was there, within her power as it were, he must speak. I fear that what he said will not be approved by any strong-minded reader. I fear that our lover will henceforth be considered by such a one as being but a weak, wishy-washy man, who had hardly any mind of his own to speak of;—that he was a man of no account, as the poor people say. "Miss Prettyman, what message ought I to send to her?" he said.

"Nay, Major Grantly, how can I tell you that? How can I put words into your mouth?"

"It is n't the words," he said; "but the feelings."

"And how can I tell the feelings of your heart?"

"Oh, as for that, I know what my feelings are. I do love her with all my heart;—I do, indeed. A fortnight ago I was only thinking whether she would accept me when I asked her,—wondering whether I was too old for her, and whether she would mind having Edith to take care of."

"She is very fond of Edith,—very fond indeed."

"Is she?" said the major, more distracted than ever. Why should he not do the magnificent thing after all? "But it is a great charge for a young girl when she marries."

"It is a great charge;—a very great charge. It is for you to think whether you should entrust so great a charge to one so young."

"I have no fear about that at all."

"Nor should I have any,—as you ask me. We have known Grace well, thoroughly, and are quite sure that she will do her duty in that state of life to which it may please God to call her."

The major was aware when this was said to him that he had not come to Miss Prettyman for a character of the girl he loved; and yet he was not angry at receiving it. He was neither angry, nor even indifferent. He accepted the character almost gratefully, though he felt that he was being led away from his purpose. He consoled himself for this, however, by remembering that the path by which Miss Prettyman was now leading him, led to the magnificent, and to those pleasant castles in the air which he had been building as he walked into Silverbridge. "I am quite sure that she is all that you say," he replied. "Indeed, I had made up my mind about that long ago."

"And what can I do for you, Major Grantly?"

"You think I ought not to see her?"

"I will ask herself, if you please. I have such trust in her judgment that I should leave her altgether to her own discretion."

The magnificent thing must be done, and the major made up his mind accordingly. Something of regret came over his spirit as he thought of a father-in-law disgraced and degraded, and of his own father broken-hearted. But now there was hardly an alternative left to him. And was it not the manly thing for him to do? He had loved the girl before this trouble had come upon her, and was he not bound to accept the burden which his love had brought with it? "I will see her," he said, "at once, if you will let me, and ask her to be my wife. But I must see her alone."

Then Miss Prettyman paused. Hitherto she had undoubtedly been playing her fish cautiously, or rather her young friend's fish,—perhaps I may say cunningly. She had descended to artifice on behalf of the girl whom she loved, admired, and pitied. She had seen some way into the man's mind, and had been partly aware of his purpose,—of his infirmity of purpose, of his double purpose. She had perceived that a word from her might help Grace's chance, and had led the man on till he had committed himself, at any rate to her. In doing this she had been actuated by friendship rather than by abstract principle. But now, when the moment had come in which she must decide upon some action, she paused. Was it right, for the sake of either of them, that an offer of marriage should be made at such a moment as this? It might be very well, in regard to some future time, that the major

should have so committed himself. She saw something of the man's spirit, and believed that, having gone so far, having so far told his love, he would return to his love hereafter, let the result of the Crawley trial be what it might. But,—but, this could be no proper time for love-making. Though Grace loved the man, as Miss Prettyman knew well,—though Grace loved the child, having allowed herself to long to call it her own,—though such a marriage would be the making of Grace's fortune as those who loved her could hardly have hoped that it should ever have been made, she would certainly refuse the man if he were to propose to her now. She would refuse him, and then the man would be free;—free to change his mind if he thought fit. Considering all these things, craftily in the exercise of her friendship, too cunningly, I fear, to satisfy the claims of a high morality, she resolved that the major had better not see Miss Crawley at the present moment. Miss Prettyman paused before she replied, and, when she did speak, Major Grantly had risen from his chair and was standing with his back to the fire. "Major Grantly," she said, "you shall see her if you please, and if she pleases; but I doubt whether her answer at such a moment as this would be that which you would wish to receive."

"You think she would refuse me."

"I do not think that she would accept you now. She would feel,—I am sure she would feel, that these hours of her father's sorrow are not hours in which love should be either offered or accepted. You shall, however, see her if you please."

The major allowed himself a moment for thought; and as he thought he sighed. Grace Crawley became

more beautiful in his eyes than ever, was endowed by these words from Miss Prettyman with new charms and brighter virtues than he had seen before. Let come what might he would ask her to be his wife on some future day, if he did not so ask her now. For the present, perhaps, he had better be guided by Miss Prettyman. "Then I will not see her," he said.

"I think that will be the wiser course."

"Of course you knew before this that I—loved her?"

"I thought so, Major Grantly."

"And that I intended to ask her to be my wife?"

"Well; since you put the question to me so plainly, I must confess that as Grace's friend I should not quite have let things go on as they have gone,—though I am not at all disposed to interfere with any girl whom I believe to be pure and good as I know her to be,—but still I should hardly have been justified in letting things go as they have gone, if I had not believed that such was your purpose."

"I wanted to set myself right with you, Miss Prettyman."

"You are right with me—quite right;" and she got up and gave him her hand. "You are a fine, noble-hearted gentleman, and I hope that our Grace may live to be your happy wife, and the mother of your darling child, and the mother of other children. I do not see how a woman could have a happier lot in life."

"And will you give Grace my love?"

"I will tell her at any rate that you have been here, and that you have inquired after her with the greatest kindness. She will understand what that means without any word of love."

"Can I do anything for her,—or for her father; I mean in the way of—money? I don't mind mentioning it to you, Miss Prettyman."

"I will tell her that you are to do it, if anything can be done. For myself I feel no doubt that the mystery will be cleared up at last; and then, if you will come here, we shall be so glad to see you;—I shall, at least."

Then the major went, and Miss Prettyman herself actually descended with him into the hall, and bade him farewell most affectionately before her sister and two of the maids who came out to open the door. Miss Anne Prettyman, when she saw the great friendship with which the major was dismissed, could not contain herself, but asked most impudent questions, in a whisper indeed, but in such a whisper that any sharp-eared maid-servant could hear and understand them. "Is it settled," she asked, when her sister had ascended only the first flight of stairs;—"has he popped?" The look with which the elder sister punished and dismayed the younger, I would not have borne for twenty pounds. She simply looked, and said nothing, but passed on. When she had regained her room she rang the bell, and desired the servant to ask Miss Crawley to be good enough to step to her. Poor Miss Anne retired discomfited into the solitude of one of the lower rooms, and sat for some minutes all alone, recovering from the shock of her sister's anger. "At any rate he has n't popped," she said to herself, as she made her way back to the school.

After that Miss Prettyman and Miss Crawley were closeted together for about an hour. What passed between them need not be repeated here word for word; but it may be understood that Miss Prettyman

said no more than she ought to have said, and that Grace understood all that she ought to have understood. "No man ever behaved with more considerate friendship, or more like a gentleman," said Miss Prettyman.

"I am sure he is very good, and I am so glad he did not ask to see me," said Grace. Then Grace went away, and Miss Prettyman sat awhile in thought, considering what she had done, not without some stings of conscience.

Major Grantly, as he walked home, was not altogether satisfied with himself, though he gave himself credit for some diplomacy which I do not think he deserved. He felt that Miss Prettyman and the world in general, should the world in general ever hear anything about it, would give him credit for having behaved well; and that he had obtained this credit without committing himself to the necessity of marrying the daughter of a thief, should things turn out badly in regard to the father. But,—and this but robbed him of all the pleasure which comes from real success,—but he had not treated Grace Crawley with the perfect generosity which love owes, and he was in some degree ashamed of himself. He felt, however, that he might probably have Grace, should he choose to ask for her when this trouble should have passed by. "And I will," he said to himself, as he entered the gate of his own paddock, and saw his child in her perambulator before the nurse. "And I will ask her, sooner or later, let things go as they may." Then he took the perambulator under his own charge for half-an-hour, to the satisfaction of the nurse, of the child, and of himself.

CHAPTER VIII.

MR. CRAWLEY IS TAKEN TO SILVERBRIDGE.

It had become necessary on the Monday morning that Mrs. Crawley should obtain from her husband an undertaking that he would present himself before the magistrates at Silverbridge on the Thursday. She had been made to understand that the magistrates were sinning against the strict rule of the law in not issuing a warrant at once for Mr. Crawley's apprehension; and that they were so sinning at the instance of Mr. Walker,—at whose instance they would have committed almost any sin practicable by a board of English magistrates, so great was their faith in him; and she knew that she was bound to answer her engagement. She had also another task to perform—that, namely, of persuading him to employ an attorney for his defence; and she was prepared with the name of an attorney, one Mr. Mason, also of Silverbridge, who had been recommended to her by Mr. Walker. But when she came to the performance of these two tasks on the Monday morning, she found that she was unable to accomplish either of them. Mr. Crawley first declared that he would have nothing to do with any attorney. As to that he seemed to have made up his mind beforehand, and she saw at once that she had no hope of shaking him. But when she found that he was equally obstinate in the other matter, and that he declared that

he would not go before the magistrates unless he were made to do so,—unless the policeman came and fetched him, then she almost sank beneath the burden of her troubles, and for a while was disposed to let things go as they would.

On the Sunday the poor man had exerted himself to get through his Sunday duties, and he had succeeded. He had succeeded so well that his wife had thought that things might yet come right with him, that he would remember, before it was too late, the true history of that unhappy bit of paper, and that he was rising above that half-madness which for months past had afflicted him. On the Sunday evening, when he was tired with his work, she thought it best to say nothing to him about the magistrates and the business of Thursday. But on the Monday morning she commenced her task, feeling that she owed it to Mr. Walker to lose no more time. He was very decided in his manners, and made her understand that he would employ no lawyer on his own behalf. "Why should I want a lawyer? I have done nothing wrong," he said. Then she tried to make him understand that many who may have done nothing wrong require a lawyer's aid. "And who is to pay him?" he asked. To this she replied, unfortunately, that there would be no need of thinking of that at once. "And I am to get further into debt!" he said. "I am to put myself right before the world by incurring debts which I know I can never pay? When it has been a question of food for the children I have been weak, but I will not be weak in such a matter as this. I will have no lawyer." She did not regard this denial on his part as very material, though she would fain have followed Mr. Walker's advice had

she been able; but when, later in the day, he declared that the police should fetch him, then her spirit gave way. Early in the morning he seemed to assent to the expediency of going into Silverbridge on the Thursday, and it was not till after he had worked himself into a rage about the proposed attorney that he utterly refused to make the journey. During the whole day, however, his state was such as almost to break his wife's heart. He would do nothing. He would not go to the school, nor even stir beyond the house-door. He would not open a book. He would not eat, nor would he even sit at table or say the accustomed grace when the scanty midday meal was placed upon the table. "Nothing is blessed to me," he said, when his wife pressed him to say the words for their child's sake. "Shall I say that I thank God when my heart is thankless? Shall I serve my child by a lie?" Then for hours he sat in the same position, in the old arm-chair, hanging over the fire speechless, sleepless, thinking ever, as she well knew, of the injustice of the world. She hardly dared to speak to him, so great was the bitterness of his words when he was goaded to reply. At last, late in the evening, feeling that it would be her duty to send in to Mr. Walker early on the following morning, she laid her hand gently on his shoulder and asked him for his promise. "I may tell Mr. Walker that you will be there on Thursday?"

"No," he said, shouting at her. "No. I will have no such message sent." She started back, trembling. Not that she was accustomed to tremble at his ways, or to show that she feared him in his paroxysms, but that his voice had been louder than she had before known it. "I will hold no intercourse with them

at Silverbridge in this matter. Do you hear me, Mary?"

"I hear you, Josiah; but I must keep my word to Mr. Walker. I promised that I would send to him."

"Tell him, then, that I will not stir a foot out of this house on Thursday of my own accord. On Thursday I shall be here; and here I will remain all day,—unless they take me hence by force."

"But, Josiah——"

"Will you obey me, or shall I walk into Silverbridge myself and tell the man that I will not come to him?" Then he arose from his chair and stretched forth his hand to his hat as though he was going forth immediately, on his way to Silverbridge. The night was now pitch dark, and the rain was falling, and abroad he would encounter all the severity of the pitiless winter. Still it might have been better that he should have gone. The exercise and the fresh air, even the wet and the mud, would have served to bring back his mind to reason. But his wife thought of the misery of the journey, of his scanty clothing, of his worn boots, of the need there was to preserve the raiment which he wore; and she remembered that he was fasting,—that he had eaten nothing since the morning, and that he was not fit to be alone. She stopped him, therefore, before he could reach the door.

"Your bidding shall be done," she said,—"of course."

"Tell them, then, that they must seek me here if they want me."

"But, Josiah, think of the parish,—of the people who respect you. For their sakes let it not be said that you were taken away by policemen."

"Was St. Paul not bound in prison? Did he think of what the people might see?"

"If it were necessary, I would encourage you to bear it without a murmur."

"It is necessary, whether you murmur, or do not murmur. Murmur, indeed! Why does not your voice ascend to heaven with one loud wail against the cruelty of man?" Then he went forth from the room into an empty chamber on the other side of the passage; and his wife, when she followed him there after a few minutes, found him on his knees, with his forehead against the floor, and with his hands clutching at the scanty hairs of his head. Often before had she seen him so, on the same spot, half grovelling, half prostrate in prayer, reviling in his agony all things around him,—nay, nearly all things above him,—and yet striving to reconcile himself to his Creator by the humiliation of confession.

It might be better with him now if only he could bring himself to some softness of heart. Softly she closed the door, and placing the candle on the mantel-shelf, softly she knelt beside him, and softly touched his hands with hers. He did not stir nor utter a word, but seemed to clutch at his thin locks more violently than before. Then she kneeling there, aloud, but with low voice, with her thin hands clasped, uttered a prayer in which she asked her God to remove from her husband the bitterness of that hour. He listened till she had finished, and then he rose slowly to his feet. "It is in vain," said he. "It is all in vain. It is all in vain." Then he returned back to the parlour, and seating himself again in the arm-chair, remained there without speaking till past midnight. At last, when

she told him that she herself was very cold, and reminded him that for the last hour there had been no fire, still speechless, he went up with her to their bed.

Early on the following morning she contrived to let him know that she was about to send a neighbour's son over with a note to Mr. Walker, fearing to urge him further to change his mind; but hoping that he might express his purpose of doing so when he heard that the letter was to be sent; but he took no notice whatever of her words. At this moment he was reading Greek with his daughter, or rather rebuking her because she could not be induced to read Greek.

"Oh, papa," the poor girl said, "don't scold me now. I am so unhappy because of all this."

"And am not I unhappy?" he said, as he closed the book. "My God, what have I done against thee, that my lines should be cast in such terrible places?"

The letter was sent to Mr. Walker. "He knows himself to be innocent," said the poor wife, writing what best excuse she knew how to make, "and thinks that he should take no step himself in such a matter. He will not employ a lawyer, and he says that he should prefer that he should be sent for, if the law requires his presence at Silverbridge on Thursday." All this she wrote, as though she felt that she ought to employ a high tone in defending her husband's purpose; but she broke down altogether in the few words of the postscript: "Indeed, indeed I have done what I could!" Mr. Walker understood it all, both the high tone and the subsequent fall.

On the Thursday morning, at about ten o'clock, a fly stopped at the gate of the Hogglestock Parsonage, and out of it there came two men. One was dressed

in ordinary black clothes, and seemed from his bearing to be a respectable man of the middle class of life. He was, however, the superintendent of police for the Silverbridge district. The other man was a policeman, pure and simple, with the helmet-looking hat and all the ordinary half-military and wholly disagreeable outward adjuncts of the profession. "Wilkins," said the superintendent, "likely enough I shall want you, for they tell me the gent is uncommon strange. But if I don't call you when I come out, just open the door like a servant, and mount up on the box when we 're in. And don't speak nor say nothing." Then the senior policeman entered the house.

He found Mrs. Crawley sitting in the parlour with her bonnet and shawl on, and Mr. Crawley in the arm-chair, leaning over the fire. "I suppose we had better go with you," said Mrs. Crawley directly the door was opened; for of course she had seen the arrival of the fly from the window.

"The gentleman had better come with us, if he 'll be so kind," said Thompson. "I 've brought a close carriage for him."

"But I may go with him?" said the wife, with frightened voice. "I may accompany my husband. He is not well, sir, and wants assistance."

Thompson thought about it for a moment before he spoke. There was room in the fly for only two, or if for three, still he knew his place better than to thrust himself inside together with his prisoner and his prisoner's wife. He had been specially asked by Mr. Walker to be very civil. Only one could sit on the box with the driver, and if the request was conceded the poor policeman must walk back. The walk, how-

ever, would not kill the policeman. "All right, ma'am," said Thompson;—"that is, if the gentleman will just pass his word not to get out till I ask him."

"He will not! He will not!" said Mrs. Crawley.

"I will pass my word for nothing," said Mr. Crawley.

Upon hearing this, Thompson assumed a very long face, and shook his head as he turned his eyes first towards the husband and then towards the wife, and shrugged his shoulders, and compressing his lips, blew out his breath, as though in this way he might blow off some of the mingled sorrow and indignation with which the gentleman's words afflicted him.

Mrs. Crawley rose and came close to him. "You may take my word for it, he will not stir. You may indeed. He thinks it incumbent on him not to give any undertaking himself, because he feels himself to be so harshly used."

"I don't know about harshness," said Thompson, brindling up. "A close carriage brought and——"

"I will walk. If I am made to go, I will walk," shouted Mr. Crawley.

"I did not allude to you,—or to Mr. Walker," said the poor wife. "I know you have been most kind. I meant the harshness of the circumstances. Of course he is innocent, and you must feel for him."

"Yes, I feel for him, and for you too, ma'am."

"That is all I meant. He knows his own innocence, and therefore he is unwilling to give way in anything."

"Of course he knows hisself, that 's certain. But he 'd better come in the carriage if only because of the dirt and slush."

"He will go in the carriage; and I will go with him. There will be room there for you, sir."

Thompson looked up at the rain, and told himself that it was very cold. Then he remembered Mr. Walker's injunction, and bethought himself that Mrs. Crawley, in spite of her poverty, was a lady. He conceived even unconsciously the idea that something was due to her because of her poverty. "I 'll go with the driver," said he, "but he 'll only give hisself a deal of trouble if he attempts to get out."

"He won't; he won't," said Mrs. Crawley. "And I thank you with all my heart."

"Come along, then," said Thompson.

She went up to her husband, hat in hand, and, looking round to see that she was not watched, put the hat on his head, and then lifted him as it were from his chair. He did not refuse to be led, and allowing her to throw round his shoulders the old cloak which was hanging in the passage, he passed out, and was the first to seat himself in the Silverbridge fly. His wife followed him, and did not hear the blandishments with which Thompson instructed his myrmidon to follow through the mud on foot. Slowly they made their way through the lanes, and it was nearly twelve when the fly was driven into the yard of the George and Vulture at Silverbridge.

Silverbridge, though it was blessed with a mayor and corporation, and was blessed also with a Member of Parliament all to itself, was not blessed with any court-house. The magistrates were therefore compelled to sit in the big room at the George and Vulture, in which the county balls were celebrated, and the meeting of the West Barsetshire freemasons was held. That part

of the country was, no doubt, very much ashamed of its backwardness in this respect, but as yet nothing had been done to remedy the evil. Thompson and his fly were therefore driven into the yard of the Inn, and Mr. and Mrs. Crawley were ushered by him up into a little bed-chamber close adjoining to the big room in which the magistrates were already assembled. "There 's a bit of fire here," said Thompson, "and you can make yourselves a little warm." He himself was shivering with the cold. "When the gents is ready in there, I 'll just come and fetch you."

"I may go in with him?" said Mrs. Crawley.

"I 'll have a chair for you at the end of the table, just nigh to him," said Thompson. "You can slip into it and say nothing to nobody." Then he left them and went away to the magistrates.

Mr. Crawley had not spoken a word since he had entered the vehicle. Nor had she said much to him, but had sat with him holding his hand in hers. Now he spoke to her,—"Where is it that we are?" he asked.

"At Silverbridge, dearest."

"But what is this chamber? And why are we here?"

"We are to wait here till the magistrates are ready. They are in the next room."

"But this is the Inn?"

"Yes, dear, it is the Inn."

"And I see crowds of people about." There were crowds of people about. There had been men in the yard, and others standing about on the stairs, and the public room was full of men who were curious to see the clergyman who had stolen twenty pounds, and to hear what would be the result of the case before the

magistrates. He must be committed; so, at least, said everybody; but then there would be the question of bail. Would the magistrates let him out on bail, and who would be the bailmen? "Why are the people here?" said Mr. Crawley.

"I suppose it is the custom when the magistrates are sitting," said his wife.

"They have come to see the degradation of a clergyman," said he;—"and they will not be disappointed."

"Nothing can degrade but guilt," said his wife.

"Yes,—misfortune can degrade, and poverty. A man is degraded when the cares of the world press so heavily upon him that he cannot rouse himself. They have come to look at me as though I were a hunted beast."

"It is but their custom always on such days."

"They have not always a clergyman before them as a criminal." Then he was silent for a while, while she was chafing his cold hands. "Would that I were dead, before they had brought me to this! Would that I were dead!"

"Is it not right, dear, that we should all bear what He sends us?"

"Would that I were dead!" he repeated. "The load is too heavy for me to bear, and I would that I were dead!"

The time seemed to be very long before Thompson returned and asked them to accompany him into the big room. When he did so, Mr. Crawley grasped hold of his chair as though he had resolved that he would not go. But his wife whispered a word to him, and he obeyed her. "He will follow me," she said to the

policeman. And in that way they went from the small room into the large one. Thompson went first; Mrs. Crawley with her veil down came next; and the wretched man followed his wife, with his eyes fixed upon the ground and his hands clasped together upon his breast. He could at first have seen nothing, and could hardly have known where he was when they placed him in a chair. She, with a better courage, contrived to look round through her veil, and saw that there was a long board or table covered with green cloth, and that six or seven gentlemen were sitting at one end of it, while there seemed to be a crowd standing along the sides and about the room. Her husband was seated at the other end of the table, near the corner, and round the corner,—so that she might be close to him,—her chair had been placed. On the other side of him there was another chair, now empty, intended for any professional gentleman whom he might choose to employ.

There were five magistrates sitting there. Lord Lufton, from Framley, was in the chair;—a handsome man, still young, who was very popular in the county. The cheque which had been cashed had borne his signature, and he had consequently expressed his intention of not sitting at the board; but Mr. Walker, desirous of having him there, had overruled him, showing him that the loss was not his loss. The cheque, if stolen, had not been stolen from him. He was not the prosecutor. "No, by Jove," said Lord Lufton; "if I could quash the whole thing, I 'd do it at once!"

"You can't do that, my lord, but you may help us at the board," said Mr. Walker.

Then there was the Hon. George De Courcy, Lord

De Courcy's brother, from Castle Courcy. Lord De Courcy did not live in the county, but his brother did so, and endeavoured to maintain the glory of the family by the discretion of his conduct. He was not, perhaps, among the wisest of men, but he did very well as a country magistrate, holding his tongue, keeping his eyes open, and, on such occasions as this, obeying Mr. Walker in all things. Dr. Tempest was also there, the rector of the parish, he being both magistrate and clergyman. There were many in Silverbridge who declared that Dr. Tempest would have done far better to stay away when a brother clergyman was thus to be brought before the bench; but it had been long since Dr. Tempest had cared what was said about him in Silverbridge. He had become so accustomed to the life he led as to like to be disliked, and to be enamoured of unpopularity. So when Mr. Walker had ventured to suggest to him that, perhaps, he might not choose to be there, he had laughed Mr. Walker to scorn. "Of course I shall be there," he said. "I am interested in the case,—very much interested. Of course I shall be there." And had not Lord Lufton been present he would have made himself more conspicuous by taking the chair. Mr. Fothergill was the fourth. Mr. Fothergill was man of business to the Duke of Omnium, who was the great owner of property in and about Silverbridge, and he was the most active magistrate in that part of the county. He was a sharp man, and not at all likely to have any predisposition in favour of a clergyman. The fifth was Dr. Thorne, of Chaldicotes, a gentleman whose name has been already mentioned in these pages. He had been for many years a medical man practising in a little village

in the further end of the county; but it had come to be his fate, late in life, to marry a great heiress, with whose money the ancient house and domain of Chaldicotes had been purchased from the Sowerbys. Since then Dr. Thorne had done his duty well as a country gentleman,—not, however, without some little want of smoothness between him and the duke's people.

Chaldicotes lay next to the duke's territory, and the duke had wished to buy Chaldicotes. When Chaldicotes slipped through the duke's fingers and went into the hands of Dr. Thorne,—or of Dr. Thorne's wife,—the duke had been very angry with Mr. Fothergill. Hence it had come to pass that there had not always been smoothness between the duke's people and the Chaldicotes people. It was now rumoured that Dr. Thorne intended to stand for the county on the next vacancy, and that did not tend to make things smoother. On the right hand of Lord Lufton sat Lord George and Mr. Fothergill, and beyond Mr. Fothergill sat Mr. Walker, and beyond Mr. Walker sat Mr. Walker's clerk. On the left hand of the chairman were Dr. Tempest and Dr. Thorne, and a little lower down was Mr. Zachary Winthrop, who held the situation of clerk to the magistrates. Many people in Silverbridge said that this was all wrong, as Mr. Winthrop was partner with Mr. Walker, who was always employed before the magistrates if there was any employment going for an attorney. For this, however, Mr. Walker cared very little. He had so much of his own way in Silverbridge, that he was supposed to care nothing for anybody.

There were many other gentlemen in the room, and some who knew Mr. Crawley with more or less inti-

macy. He, however, took notice of no one, and when one friend, who had really known him well, came up behind and spoke to him gently leaning over his chair, the poor man hardly recognised his friend.

"I 'm sure your husband won't forget me," said Mr. Robarts, the clergyman of Framley, as he gave his hand to that lady across the back of Mr. Crawley's chair.

"No, Mr. Robarts, he does not forget you. But you must excuse him if at this moment he is not quite himself. It is a trying situation for a clergyman."

"I can understand all that; but I 'll tell you why I have come. I suppose this inquiry will finish the whole affair and clear up whatever may be the difficulty. But should it not do so, it may be just possible, Mrs. Crawley, that something may be said about bail. I don't understand much about it, and I dare say you do not either; but if there should be anything of that sort, let Mr. Crawley name me. A brother clergyman will be best, and I 'll have some other gentleman with me." Then he left her, not waiting for any answer.

At the same time there was a conversation going on between Mr. Walker and another attorney standing behind him, Mr. Mason. "I 'll go to him," said Walker, "and try to arrange it." So Mr. Walker seated himself in the empty chair beside Mr. Crawley, and endeavoured to explain to the wretched man, that he would do well to allow Mr. Mason to assist him. Mr. Crawley seemed to listen to all that was said, and then turned upon the speaker sharply: "I will have no one to assist me," he said, so loudly that every one in the room heard the words. "I am innocent. Why should I want assistance? Nor have I money to pay

for it." Mr. Mason made a quick movement forward, intending to explain that that consideration need offer no impediment, but was stopped by further speech from Mr. Crawley. "I will have no one to help me," said he, standing upright, and for the first time removing his hat from his head. "Go on, and do what it is you have to do." After that he did not sit down till the proceedings were nearly over, though he was invited more than once by Lord Lufton to do so.

We need not go through all the evidence that was brought to bear upon the question. It was proved that money for the cheque was paid to Mr. Crawley's messenger, and that this money was given to Mr. Crawley. When there occurred some little delay in the chain of evidence necessary to show that Mr. Crawley had signed and sent the cheque and got the money, he became impatient. "Why do you trouble the man?" he said. "I had the cheque, and I sent him. I got the money. Has any one denied it, that you should strive to drive a poor man like that beyond his wits?" Then Mr. Soames and the manager of the bank showed what inquiry had been made as soon as the cheque came back from the London bank; how at first they had both thought that Mr. Crawley could of course explain the matter, and how he had explained it by a statement which was manifestly untrue. Then there was evidence to prove that the cheque could not have been paid to him by Mr. Soames, and as this was given, Mr. Crawley shook his head and again became impatient. "I erred in that," he exclaimed. "Of course I erred. In my haste I thought it was so, and in my haste I said so. I am not good at reckoning money and remembering sums. But I saw that I had

been wrong when my error was shown to me, and I acknowledged at once that I had been wrong."

Up to this point he had behaved not only with so much spirit, but with so much reason, that his wife began to hope that the importance of the occasion had brought back the clearness of his mind, and that he would, even now, be able to place himself right as the inquiry went on. Then it was explained that Mr. Crawley had stated that the cheque had been given to him by Dean Arabin, as soon as it was shown that it could not have been given to him by Mr. Soames. In reference to this, Mr. Walker was obliged to explain that application had been made to the dean, who was abroad, and that the dean had stated that he had given fifty pounds to his friend. Mr. Walker explained also that the very notes of which this fifty pounds had consisted had been traced back to Mr. Crawley, and that they had had no connection with the cheque or with the money which had been given for the cheque at the bank.

Mr. Soames stated that he had lost the cheque with a pocket-book; that he had certainly lost it on the day on which he had called on Mr. Crawley at Hogglestock; and that he missed his pocket-book on his journey back from Hogglestock to Barchester. At the moment of missing it he remembered that he had taken the book out from his pocket in Mr. Crawley's room, and at that moment he had not doubted but that he had left it in Mr. Crawley's house. He had written and sent to Mr. Crawley to inquire, but had been assured that nothing had been fond. There had been no other property of value in the pocket-book,—nothing but a few visiting-cards and a memorandum, and

he had therefore stopped the cheque at the London bank, and thought no more about it.

Mr. Crawley was then asked to explain in what way he came possessed of the cheque. The question was first put by Lord Lufton; but it soon fell into Mr. Walker's hands, who certainly asked it with all the kindness with which such an inquiry could be made. Could Mr. Crawley at all remember by what means that bit of paper had come into his possession, or how long he had had it? He answered the last question first. "It had been with him for months." And why had he kept it? He looked round the room sternly, almost savagely, before he answered, fixing his eyes for a moment upon almost every face around him as he did so. Then he spoke. "I was driven by shame to keep it;—and then by shame to use it." That this statement was true, no one in the room doubted.

And then the other question was pressed upon him; and he lifted up his hands, and raised his voice, and swore by the Saviour in whom he trusted, that he knew not from whence the money had come to him. Why, then, had he said that it had come from the dean? He had thought so. The dean had given him money, covered up, in an enclosure, "so that the touch of the coin might not add to my disgrace in taking his alms," said the wretched man, thus speaking openly and freely in his agony of the shame which he had striven so persistently to hide. He had not seen the dean's moneys as they had been given, and he had thought that the cheque had been with them. Beyond that he could tell them nothing.

Then there was a conference between the magistrates and Mr. Walker, in which Mr. Walker submitted that

the magistrates had no alternative but to commit the gentleman. To this Lord Lufton demurred, and with him Dr. Thorne.

"I believe, as I am sitting here," said Lord Lufton, "that he has told the truth, and that he does not know any more than I do from whence the cheque came."

"I am quite sure he does not," said Dr. Thorne.

Lord George remarked that it was the "queerest go he had ever come across." Dr. Tempest merely shook his head. Mr. Fothergill pointed out that even supposing the gentleman's statement to be true, it by no means went towards establishing the gentleman's innocence. The cheque had been traced to the gentleman's hands, and the gentleman was bound to show how it had come into his possession. Even supposing that the gentleman had found the cheque in his house, which was likely enough, he was not thereby justified in changing it, and applying the proceeds to his own purposes. Mr. Walker told them that Mr. Fothergill was right, and that the only excuse to be made for Mr. Crawley was that he was out of his senses.

"I don't see it," said Lord Lufton. "I might have a lot of paper money by me, and not know from Adam where I got it."

"But you would have to show where you got it, my lord, when inquiry was made," said Mr. Fothergill.

Lord Lufton, who was not particularly fond of Mr. Fothergill, and was very unwilling to be instructed by him in any of the duties of a magistrate, turned his back at once upon the duke's agent; but within three minutes afterwards he had submitted to the same instructions from Mr. Walker.

Mr. Crawley had again seated himself, and during

this period of the affair was leaning over the table with his face buried on his arms. Mrs. Crawley sat by his side, utterly impotent as to any assistance, just touching him with her hand, and waiting behind her veil till she should be made to understand what was the decision of the magistrates. This was at last communicated to her,—and to him,—in a whisper by Mr. Walker. Mr. Crawley must understand that he was committed to take his trial at Barchester, at the next assizes, which would be held in April, but that bail would be taken;—his own bail in five hundred pounds, and that of two others in two hundred and fifty pounds each. And Mr. Walker explained further that he and the bailmen were ready, and that the bail-bond was prepared. The bailmen were to be the Rev. Mr. Robarts and Major Grantly. In five minutes the bond was signed and Mr. Crawley was at liberty to go away, a free man,—till the Barchester Assizes should come round in April.

Of all that was going on at this time Mr. Crawley knew little or nothing, and Mrs. Crawley did not know much. She did say a word of thanks to Mr. Robarts, and begged that the same might be said to—the other gentleman. If she had heard the major's name she did not remember it. Then they were led out back into the bedroom, where Mrs. Walker was found, anxious to do something, if she only knew what, to comfort the wretched husband and the wretched wife. But what comfort or consolation could there be within their reach? There was tea made ready for them, and sandwiches cut from the Inn larder. And there was sherry in the Inn decanter. But no such comfort as that was possible for either of them.

They were taken home again in the fly, returning without the escort of Mr. Thompson, and as they went some few words were spoken by Mrs. Crawley. "Josiah," she said, "there will be a way out of this, even yet, if you will only hold up your head and trust."

"There is a way out of it," he said. "There is a way. There is but one way." When he had so spoken she said no more, but resolved that her eye should never be off him, no,—not for a moment. Then, when she had gotten him once more into that front parlour, she threw her arms round him and kissed him.

CHAPTER IX.

GRACE CRAWLEY GOES TO ALLINGTON.

THE tidings of what had been done by the magistrates at their petty sessions was communicated the same night to Grace Crawley by Miss Prettyman. Miss Anne Prettyman had heard the news within five minutes of the execution of the bail-bond, and had rushed to her sister with information as to the event. "They have found him guilty; they have, indeed. They have convicted him,—or whatever it is, because he could n't say where he got it." "You do not mean that they have sent him to prison?" "No;—not to prison; not as yet, that is. I don't understand it altogether; but he 's to be tried at the assizes. In the mean time he 's to be out on bail. Major Grantly is to be the bail,—he and Mr. Robarts. That, I think, was very nice of him." It was undoubtedly the fact that Miss Anne Prettyman had received an accession of pleasurable emotion when she learned that Mr. Crawley had not been sent away scathless, but had been condemned, as it were, to a public trial at the assizes. And yet she would have done anything in her power to save Grace Crawley, or even to save her father. And it must be explained that Miss Anne Prettyman was supposed to be specially efficient in teaching Roman history to her pupils, although she

was so manifestly ignorant of the course of law in the country in which she lived. "Committed him," said Miss Prettyman, correcting her sister with scorn. "They have not convicted him. Had they convicted him, there could be no question of bail." "I don't know how all that is, Annabella, but at any rate Major Grantly is to be the bailman, and there is to be another trial at Barchester." "There cannot be more than one trial in a criminal case," said Miss Prettyman, "unless the jury should disagree, or something of that kind. I suppose he has been committed, and that the trial will take place at the assizes." "Exactly;—that 's just it." Had Lord Lufton appeared as prætor, and had Thompson walked before him as lictor, carrying the fasces, Miss Anne would have known more about it.

The sad tidings were not told to Grace till the evening. Mrs. Crawley, when the inquiry was over before the magistrates, would fain have had herself driven to the Miss Prettymans' school that she might see her daughter; but she felt that to be impossible while her husband was in her charge. The father would of course have gone to his child, had the visit been suggested to him; but that would have caused another terrible scene; and the mother, considering it all in her mind, thought it better to abstain. Miss Prettyman did her best to make poor Grace think that the affair had gone so far favourably,—did her best, that is, without saying anything which her conscience told her to be false. "It is to be settled at the assizes in April," she said.

"And in the mean time what will become of papa?"

"Your papa will be at home, just as usual. He must have some one to advise him. I dare say it

would have been all over now if he would have employed an attorney."

"But it seems so hard that an attorney should be wanted."

"My dear Grace, things in this world are hard."

"But they were always harder for papa and mamma than for anybody else." In answer to this, Miss Prettyman made some remarks intended to be wise and kind at the same time. Grace, whose eyes were laden with tears, made no immediate reply to this, but reverted to her former statement, that she must go home. "I cannot remain, Miss Prettyman; I am so unhappy."

"Will you be more happy at home?"

"I can bear it better there."

The poor girl soon learned from the intended consolations of those around her, from the ill-considered kindnesses of the pupils, and from words which fell from the servants, that her father had in fact been judged to be guilty as far as judgment had as yet gone. "They do say, miss, it 's only because he had n't a lawyer," said the housekeeper. And if men so kind as Lord Lufton and Mr. Walker had made him out to be guilty, what could be expected from a stern judge down from London, who would know nothing about her poor father and his peculiarities, and from twelve jurymen who would be shopkeepers out of Barchester? It would kill her father, and then it would kill her mother; and after that it would kill her also. And there was no money in the house at home. She knew it well. She had been paid three pounds a month for her services at the school, and the money for the last two months had been sent to her mother. Yet, badly as she wanted anything that she might be able to earn,

she knew that she could not go on teaching. It had come to be acknowledged by both the Miss Prettymans that any teaching on her part for the present was impossible. She would go home and perish with the rest of them. There was no room left for hope to her, or to any of her family. They had accused her father of being a common thief,—her father whom she knew to be so nobly honest, her father whom she believed to be among the most devoted of God's servants! He was accused of a paltry theft, and the magistrates and lawyers and policemen among them had decided that the accusation was true! How could she look the girls in the face after that, or attempt to hold her own among the teachers!

On the next morning there came the letter from Miss Lily Dale, and with that in her hand she again went to Miss Prettyman. She must go home, she said. She must at any rate see her mother. Could Miss Prettyman be kind enough to send her home? "I have n't sixpence to pay for anything," she said, bursting out into tears; "and I have n't a right to ask for it." Then the statements which Miss Prettyman made in her eagerness to cover this latter misfortune were decidedly false. There was so much money owing to Grace, she said; money for this, money for that, money for anything or nothing! Ten pounds would hardly clear the account. "Nobody owes me anything; but if you 'll lend me five shillings!" said Grace in her agony. Miss Prettyman, as she made her way through this difficulty, thought of Major Grantly and his love. It would have been of no use, she knew. Had she brought them together on that Monday, Grace would have said nothing to him. Indeed, such

a meeting at such a time would have been improper. But, regarding Major Grantly, as she did, in the light of a millionaire,—for the wealth of the archdeacon was notorious,—she could not but think it a pity that poor Grace should be begging for five shillings. "You need not at any rate trouble yourself about money, Grace," said Miss Prettyman. "What is a pound or two more or less between you and me? It is almost unkind of you to think about it. Is that letter in your hand anything for me to see, my dear?" Then Grace explained that she did not wish to show Miss Dale's letter, but that Miss Dale had asked her to go to Allington. "And you will go," said Miss Prettyman. "It will be the best thing for you, and the best thing for your mother."

It was at last decided that Grace should go to her friend at Allington, and to Allington she went. She returned home for a day or two, and was persuaded by her mother to accept the invitation that had been given her. At Hogglestock, while she was there, new troubles came up, of which something shall shortly be told; but they were troubles in which Grace could give no assistance to her mother, and which, indeed, though they were in truth troubles, as will be seen, were so far beneficent that they stirred her father up to a certain action which was in itself salutary. "I think it will be better that you should be away, dearest," said the mother, who now, for the first time, heard plainly all that poor Grace had to tell about Major Grantly;—Grace having, heretofore, barely spoken, in most ambiguous words, of Major Grantly as a gentleman whom she had met at Framley and whom she had described as being "very nice."

In old days, long ago, Lucy Robarts, the present Lady Lufton, sister of the Reverend Mark Robarts the parson of Framley, had sojourned for a while under Mr. Crawley's roof at Hogglestock. Peculiar circumstances, which need not, perhaps, be told here, had given occasion for this visit. She had then resolved, —for her future destiny had been known to her before she left Mrs. Crawley's house,—that she would in coming days do much to befriend the family of her friend; but the doing of much had been very difficult. And the doing of anything had come to be very difficult through a certain indiscretion on Lord Lufton's part. Lord Lufton had offered assistance, pecuniary assistance, to Mr. Crawley, which Mr. Crawley had rejected with outspoken anger. What was Lord Lufton to him that his lordship should dare to come to him with his paltry money in his hand? But after a while, Lady Lufton, exercising some cunning in the operations of her friendship, had persuaded her sister-in-law at the Framley parsonage to have Grace Crawley over there as a visitor,—and there she had been during the summer holidays previous to the commencement of our story. And there, at Framley, she had become acquainted with Major Grantly, who was staying with Lord Lufton at Framley Court. She had then said something to her mother about Major Grantly, something ambiguous, something about his being "very nice," and the mother had thought how great was the pity that her daughter, who was "nice" too in her estimation, should have so few of those adjuncts to assist her which come from full pockets. She had thought no more about it then; but now she felt herself constrained to think more. "I don't quite understand

why he should have come to Miss Prettyman on Monday," said Grace, "because he hardly knows her at all."

"I suppose it was on business," said Mrs. Crawley.

"No, mamma, it was not on business."

"How can you tell, dear?"

"Because Miss Prettyman said it was,—it was—to ask after me. Oh, mamma, I must tell you. I know he did like me."

"Did he ever say so to you, dearest?"

"Yes, mamma."

"And what did you tell him?"

"I told him nothing, mamma."

"And did he ask to see you on Monday?"

"No, mamma; I don't think he did. I think he understood it all too well, for I could not have spoken to him then."

Mrs. Crawley pursued the cross-examination no further, but made up her mind that it would be better that her girl should be away from her wretched home during this period of her life. If it were written in the book of fate that one of her children should be exempted from the series of misfortunes which seemed to fall, one after another, almost as a matter of course, upon her husband, upon her, and upon her family;—if so great good fortune were in store for her Grace as such a marriage as this which seemed to be so nearly offered to her, it might probably be well that Grace should be as little at home as possible. Mrs. Crawley had heard nothing but good of Major Grantly; but she knew that the Grantlys were proud rich people,—who lived with their heads high up in the county,—and it could hardly be that a son of the archdeacon

would like to take his bride direct from Hogglestock Parsonage.

It was settled that Grace should go to Allington as soon as a letter could be received from Miss Dale in return to Grace's note, and on the third morning after her arrival at home she started. None but they who have themselves been poor gentry,—gentry so poor as not to know how to raise a shilling,—can understand the peculiar bitterness of the trials which such poverty produces. The poverty of the normal poor does not approach it; or, rather, the pangs arising from such poverty are altogether of a different sort. To be hungry and have no food, to be cold and have no fuel, to be threatened with distraint for one's few chairs and tables, and with the loss of the roof over one's head,—all these miseries, which, if they do not positively reach, are so frequently near to reaching the normal poor, are, no doubt, the severest of the trials to which humanity is subjected. They threaten life,—or, if not life, then liberty,—reducing the abject one to a choice between captivity and starvation. By hook or crook, the poor gentleman or poor lady,—let the one or the other be ever so poor,—does not often come to the last extremity of the workhouse. There are such cases, but they are exceptional. Mrs. Crawley, through all her sufferings, had never yet found her cupboard to be absolutely bare, or the bread-pan to be actually empty. But there are pangs to which, at the time, starvation itself would seem to be preferable. The angry eyes of unpaid tradesmen, savage with an anger which one knows to be justifiable; the taunt of the poor servant who wants her wages; the gradual relinquishment of habits which the soft nurture of earlier,

kinder years had made second nature; the wan cheeks of the wife whose malady demands wine; the rags of the husband whose outward occupations demand decency; the neglected children, who are learning not to be the children of gentlefolk; and, worse than all, the alms and doles of half-generous friends, the waning pride, the pride that will not wane, the growing doubt whether it be not better to bow the head, and acknowledge to all the world that nothing of the pride of station is left,—that the hand is open to receive and ready to touch the cap, that the fall from the upper to the lower level has been accomplished,—these are the pangs of poverty which drive the Crawleys of the world to the frequent entertaining of that idea of the bare bodkin. It was settled that Grace should go to Allington;—but how about her clothes? And then, whence was to come the price of her journey?

"I don't think they 'll mind about my being shabby at Allington. They live very quietly there."

"But you say that Miss Dale is so very nice in all her ways."

"Lily is very nice, mamma; but I shan't mind her so much as her mother, because she knows it all. I have told her everything."

"But you have given me all your money, dearest."

"Miss Prettyman told me I was to come to her," said Grace, who had already taken some small sum from the schoolmistress, which at once had gone into her mother's pocket, and into household purposes. "She said I should be sure to go to Allington, and that of course I should go to her, as I must pass through Silverbridge."

"I hope papa will not ask about it," said Mrs.

Crawley. Luckily papa did not ask about it, being at the moment occupied much with other thoughts and other troubles, and Grace was allowed to return by Silverbridge, and to take what was needed from Miss Prettyman. Who can tell of the mending and patching, of the weary wearing midnight hours of needlework which were accomplished before the poor girl went, so that she might not reach her friend's house in actual rags? And when the work was ended, what was there to show for it? I do not think that the idea of the bare bodkin, as regarded herself, ever flitted across Mrs. Crawley's brain,—she being one of those who are very strong to endure; but it must have occurred to her very often that the repose of the grave is sweet, and that there cometh after death a levelling and making even of things, which would at last cure all her evils.

Grace no doubt looked forward to a levelling and making even of things,—or perhaps even to something more prosperous than that, which should come to her relief on this side of the grave. She could not but have high hopes in regard to her future destiny. Although, as has been said, she understood no more than she ought to have understood from Miss Prettyman's account of the conversation with Major Grantly, still, innocent as she was, she had understood much. She knew that the man loved her, and she knew also that she loved the man. She thoroughly comprehended that the present could be to her no time for listening to speeches of love, or for giving kind answers; but still I think that she did look for relief on this side of the grave.

"Tut, tut," said Miss Prettyman as Grace in vain tried to conceal her tears up in the private sanctum. "You ought to know me by this time, and to have

learned that I can understand things." The tears had flown in return not only for the five gold sovereigns which Miss Prettyman had pressed into her hand, but on account of the prettiest, soft, grey merino frock that ever charmed a girl's eye. "I should like to know how many girls I have given dresses to when they have been going out visiting. Law, my dear; they take them, many of them, from us old maids, almost as if we were only paying our debts in giving them." And then Miss Anne gave her a cloth cloak, very warm, with pretty buttons and gimp trimmings,—just such a cloak as any girl might like to wear who thought that she would be seen out walking by her Major Grantly on a Christmas morning. Grace Crawley did not expect to be seen out walking by her Major Grantly, but nevertheless she liked the cloak. By the power of her practical will, and by her true sympathy, the elder Miss Prettyman had for a while conquered the annoyance which, on Grace's part, was attached to the receiving of gifts, by the consciousness of her poverty; and when Miss Anne, with some pride in the tone of her voice, expressed a hope that Grace would think the cloak pretty, Grace put her arms pleasantly round her friend's neck, and declared that it was very pretty,—the prettiest cloak in all the world!

Grace was met at the Guestwick railway-station by her friend Lilian Dale, and was driven over to Allington in a pony carriage belonging to Lilian's uncle, the squire of the parish. I think she will be excused in having put on her new cloak, not so much because of the cold as with a view of making the best of herself before Mrs. Dale. And yet she knew that Mrs. Dale would know all the circumstances of her poverty, and

was very glad that it should be so. "I am so glad that you have come, dear," said Lily. "It will be such a comfort."

"I am sure you are very good," said Grace.

"And mamma is so glad. From the moment that we both talked ourselves into eagerness about it,—while I was writing my letter, you know, we resolved that it must be so."

"I 'm afraid I shall be a great trouble to Mrs. Dale."

"A trouble to mamma! Indeed you will not. You shall be a trouble to no one but me. I will have all the trouble myself, and the labour I delight in shall physic my pain."

Grace Crawley could not during the journey be at home and at ease even with her friend Lily. She was going to a strange house under strange circumstances. Her father had not indeed been tried and found guilty of theft, but the charge of theft had been made against him, and the magistrates before whom it had been made had thought that the charge was true. Grace knew that all the local newspapers had told the story, and was of course aware that Mrs. Dale would have heard it. Her own mind was full of it, and though she dreaded to speak of it, yet she could not be silent. Miss Dale, who understood much of this, endeavoured to talk her friend into easiness; but she feared to begin upon the one subject, and before the drive was over they were, both of them, too cold for much conversation. "There 's mamma," said Miss Dale as they drove up, turning out of the street of the village to the door of Mrs. Dale's house. "She always knows, by instinct, when I am coming. You must understand, now that you are among us, that mamma and I are

not mother and daughter, but two loving old ladies, living together in peace and harmony. We do have our quarrels,—whether the chicken shall be roast or boiled, but never anything beyond that. Mamma, here is Grace, starved to death; and she says if you don't give her some tea she will go back at once."

"I will give her some tea," said Mrs. Dale.

"And I am worse than she is, because I 've been driving. It 's all up with Bernard and Mr. Green for the next week at least. It is freezing as hard as it can freeze, and they might as well try to hunt in Lapland as here."

"They 'll console themselves with skating," said Mrs. Dale.

"Have you ever observed, Grace," said Miss Dale, "how much amusement gentlemen require, and how imperative it is that some other game should be provided when one game fails?"

"Not particularly," said Grace.

"Oh, but it is so. Now, with women, it is supposed that they can amuse themselves or live without amusement. Once or twice in a year, perhaps, something is done for them. There is an arrow-shooting party, or a ball, or a picnic. But the catering for men's sport is never-ending, and is always paramount to everything else. And yet the pet game of the day never goes off properly. In partridge time, the partridges are wild, and won't come to be killed. In hunting time the foxes won't run straight,—the wretches. They show no spirit, and will take to ground to save their brushes. Then comes a nipping frost, and skating is proclaimed; but the ice is always rough, and the woodcocks have deserted the country. And as for salmon! When the

summer comes round I do really believe that they suffer a great deal about the salmon. I 'm sure they never catch any. So they go back to their clubs, and their cards, and their billiards, and abuse their cooks and blackball their friends. That 's about it, mamma; is it not?"

"You know more about it than I do, my dear."

"Because I have to listen to Bernard, as you never will do. We 've got such a Mr. Green down here, Grace. He 's such a duck of a man,—such top-boots and all the rest of it. And yet they whisper to me that he does n't ride always to hounds. And to see him play billiards is beautiful, only he never can make a stroke. I hope you play billiards, Grace, because uncle Christopher has just had a new table put up."

"I never saw a billiard-table yet," said Grace.

"Then Mr. Green shall teach you. He 'll do anything that you ask him. If you don't approve the colour of the ball, he 'll go to London at once to get you another one. Only you must be very careful about saying that you like anything before him, as he 'll be sure to have it for you the next day. Mamma happened to say that she wanted a fourpenny postage-stamp, and he walked off to Guestwick to get it for her instantly, although it was lunch-time."

"He did nothing of the kind, Lily," said her mother. "He was going to Guestwick, and was very good-natured, and brought me back a postage-stamp that I wanted."

"Of course he 's good-natured; I know that. And there 's my cousin Bernard. He 's Captain Dale, you know. But he prefers to be called Mr. Dale, because he has left the army, and has set up as junior squire

of the parish. Uncle Christopher is the real squire; only Bernard does all the work. And now you know all about us. I 'm afraid you 'll find us dull enough, —unless you can take a fancy to Mr. Green."

"Does Mr. Green live here?" asked Grace.

"No; he does not live here. I never heard of his living anywhere. He was something once, but I don't know what; and I don't think he 's anything now in particular. But he 's Bernard's friend, and like most men, as one sees them, he never has much to do. Does Major Grantly ever go forth to fight his country's battles?" This last question she asked in a low whisper, so that the words did not reach her mother. Grace blushed up to her eyes, however, as she answered,—

"I think that Major Grantly has left the army."

"We shall get her round in a day or two, mamma," said Lily Dale to her mother that night. "I 'm sure it will be the best thing to force her to talk of her troubles."

"I would not use too much force, my dear."

"Things are better when they 're talked about. I 'm sure they are. And it will be good to make her accustomed to speak of Major Grantly. From what Mary Walker tells me, he certainly means it. And if so, she should be ready for it when it comes."

"Do not make her ready for what may never come."

"No, mamma; but she is at present such a child that she knows nothing of her own powers. She should be made to understand that it is possible that even a Major Grantly may think himself fortunate in being allowed to love her."

"I should leave all that to Nature, if I were you," said Mrs. Dale.

CHAPTER X.

DINNER AT FRAMLEY COURT.

Lord Lufton, as he drove home to Framley after the meeting of the magistrates at Silverbridge, discussed the matter with his brother-in-law, Mark Robarts, the clergyman. Lord Lufton was driving a dog-cart, and went along the road at the rate of twelve miles an hour. "I 'll tell you what it is, Mark," he said, "that man is innocent; but if he won't employ lawyers at his trial, the jury will find him guilty."

"I don't know what to think about it," said the clergyman.

"Were you in the room when he protested so vehemently that he did n't know where he got the money?"

"I was in the room all the time."

"And did you not believe him when he said that?"

"Yes,—I think I did."

"Anybody must have believed him,—except old Tempest, who never believes anybody, and Fothergill, who always suspects everybody. The truth is, that he had found the cheque and put it by, and did not remember anything about it."

"But, Lufton, surely that would amount to stealing it."

"Yes, if it was n't that he is such a poor, cracked, crazy creature, with his mind all abroad. I think

Soames did drop his book in his house. I 'm sure Soames would not say so unless he was quite confident. Somebody has picked it up, and in some way the cheque has got into Crawley's hand. Then he has locked it up and has forgotten all about it; and when that butcher threatened him, he has put his hand upon it, and he has thought, or believed, that it had come from Soames or from the dean,—or from heaven, if you will. When a man is so crazy as that, you can't judge of him as you do of others."

"But a jury must judge of him as it would of others."

"And therefore there should be a lawyer to tell the jury what to do. They should have somebody up out of the parish to show that he is beside himself half his time. His wife would be the best person, only it would be hard lines on her."

"Very hard. And after all he would only escape by being shown to be mad."

"And he is mad."

"Mrs. Proudie would come upon him in such a case as that, and sequester his living."

"And what will Mrs. Proudie do when he 's a convicted thief? Simply unfrock him, and take away his living altogether. Nothing on earth should induce me to find him guilty if I were on a jury."

"But you have committed him."

"Yes,—I 've been one, at least, in doing so. I simply did what Walker told us we must do. A magistrate is not left to himself as a juryman is. I 'd eat the biggest pair of boots in Barchester before I found him guilty. I say, Mark, you must talk it over with the women, and see what can be done for them. Lucy

tells me that they 're so poor, that if they have bread to eat, it 's as much as they have."

On this evening Archdeacon Grantly and his wife dined and slept at Framley Court, there having been a very long family friendship between old Lady Lufton and the Grantlys, and Dr. Thorne, with his wife, from Chaldicotes, also dined at Framley. There was also there another clergyman from Barchester, Mr. Champion, one of the prebendaries of the cathedral. There were only three now who had houses in the city since the retrenchments of the Ecclesiastical Commission had come into full force. And this Mr. Champion was dear to the Dowager Lady Lufton, because he carried on worthily the clerical war against the bishop which had raged in Barsetshire ever since Dr. Proudie had come there,—which war old Lady Lufton, good and pious and charitable as she was, considered that she was bound to keep up, even to the knife, till Dr. Proudie and all his satellites should have been banished into outer darkness. As the light of the Proudies still shone brightly, it was probable that poor old Lady Lufton might die before her battle was accomplished. She often said that it would be so, but when so saying, always expressed a wish that the fight might be carried on after her death. "I shall never, never rest in my grave," she had once said to the archdeacon, "while that woman sits in your father's palace." For the archdeacon's father had been Bishop of Barchester before Dr. Proudie. What mode of getting rid of the bishop or his wife Lady Lufton proposed to herself, I am unable to say; but I think she lived in hopes that in some way it might be done. If only the bishop could have been found to have stolen a cheque for

twenty pounds instead of poor Mr. Crawley, Lady Lufton would, I think, have been satisfied.

In the course of these battles Framley Court would sometimes assume a clerical aspect,—have a prevailing hue, as it were, of black coats, which was not altogether to the taste of Lord Lufton, and as to which he would make complaint to his wife, and to Mark Robarts, himself a clergyman. "There 's more of this than I can stand," he 'd say to the latter. "There 's a deuced deal more of it than you like yourself, I know."

"It 's not for me to like or dislike. It 's a great thing having your mother in the parish."

"That 's all very well; and of course she 'll do as she likes. She may ask whom she pleases here, and I shan't interfere. It 's the same as though it was her own house. But I shall take Lucy to Lufton." Now Lord Lufton had been building his house at Lufton for the last seven years, and it was not yet finished,—or nearly finished, if all that his wife and mother said was true. And if they could have their way, it never would be finished. And so, in order that Lord Lufton might not be actually driven away by the turmoils of ecclesiastical contest, the younger Lady Lufton would endeavour to moderate both the wrath and the zeal of the elder one, and would struggle against the coming clergymen. On this day, however, three sat at the board at Framley, and Lady Lufton, in her justification to her son, swore that the invitation had been given by her daughter-in-law. "You know, my dear," the dowager said to Lord Lufton, "something must be done for these poor Crawleys; and as the dean is away Lucy wants to speak to the archdeacon about them."

"And the archdeacon could not subscribe his ten-pound note without having Mr. Champion to back him?"

"My dear Ludovic, you do put it in such a way."

"Never mind, mother. I 've no special dislike to Champion; only as you are not paid five thousand a year for your trouble, it is rather hard that you should have to do all the work of opposition bishop in the diocese."

It was felt by them all,—including Lord Lufton himself, who became so interested in the matter as to forgive the black coats before the evening was over,—that this matter of Mr. Crawley's committal was very serious, and demanded the full energies of their party. It was known to them all that the feeling at the palace was inimical to Mr. Crawley. "That she-Beelzebub hates him for his poverty, and because Arabin brought him into the diocese," said the archdeacon, permitting himself to use very strong language in his allusion to the bishop's wife. It must be recorded on his behalf that he used the phrase in the presence only of the gentlemen of the party. I think he might have whispered the word into the ear of his confidential friend old Lady Lufton, and perhaps have given no offence; but he would not have ventured to use such words aloud in the presence of ladies.

"You forget, archdeacon," said Dr. Thorne, laughing, "that the she-Beelzebub is my wife's particular friend."

"Not a bit of it," said the archdeacon. "Your wife knows better than that. You tell her what I call her, and if she complains of the name, I 'll unsay it." It may therefore be supposed that Dr. Thorne, and Mrs.

Thorne, and the archdeacon, knew each other intimately, and understood each other's feelings on these matters.

It was quite true that the palace party was inimical to Mr. Crawley. Mr. Crawley undoubtedly was poor, and had not been so submissive to episcopal authority as it behoves any clergyman to be whose loaves and fishes are scanty. He had raised his back more than once against orders emanating from the palace in a manner that had made the hairs on the head of the bishop's wife to stand almost on end, and had taken as much upon himself as though his living had been worth twelve hundred a year. Mrs. Proudie, almost as energetic in her language as the archdeacon, had called him a beggarly perpetual curate. "We must have perpetual curates, my dear," the bishop had said. "They should know their places then. But what can you expect of a creature from the deanery? All that ought to be altered. The dean should have no patronage in the diocese. No dean should have any patronage. It is an abuse from the beginning to the end. Dean Arabin, if he had any conscience, would be doing the duty at Hogglestock himself." How the bishop strove to teach his wife, with mildest words, what really ought to be a dean's duty, and how the wife rejoined by teaching her husband, not in the mildest words, what ought to be a bishop's duty, we will not further inquire here. The fact that such dialogues took place at the palace is recorded simply to show that the palatial feeling in Barchester ran counter to Mr. Crawley.

And this was cause enough, if no other cause existed, for partiality to Mr. Crawley at Framley Court.

But, as has been partly explained, there existed, if possible, even stronger ground than this for adherence to the Crawley cause. The younger Lady Lufton had known the Crawleys intimately, and the elder Lady Lufton had reckoned them among the neighbouring clerical families of her acquaintance. Both these ladies were therefore staunch in their defence of Mr. Crawley. The archdeacon himself had his own reasons,—reasons which for the present he kept altogether within his own bosom,—for wishing that Mr. Crawley had never entered the diocese. Whether the perpetual curate should or should not be declared to be a thief, it would be terrible to him to have to call the child of that perpetual curate his daughter-in-law. But not the less on this occasion was he true to his order, true to his side in the diocese, true to his hatred of the palace.

"I don't believe it for a moment," he said, as he took his place on the rug before the fire in the drawing-room when the gentlemen came in from their wine. The ladies understood at once what it was that he could n't believe. Mr. Crawley had for the moment so usurped the county that nobody thought of talking of anything else.

"How is it, then," said Mrs. Thorne, "that Lord Lufton, and my husband, and the other wiseacres at Silverbridge, have committed him for trial?"

"Because we were told to do so by the lawyer," said Dr. Thorne.

"Ladies will never understand that magistrates must act in accordance with the law," said Lord Lufton.

"But you all say he 's not guilty," said Mrs. Robarts.

"The fact is, that the magistrates cannot try the

question," said the archdeacon; "they only hear the primary evidence. In this case I don't believe Crawley would ever have been committed if he had employed an attorney, instead of speaking for himself."

"Why did n't somebody make him have an attorney?" said Lady Lufton.

"I don't think any attorney in the world could have spoken for him better than he spoke for himself," said Dr. Thorne.

"And yet you committed him," said his wife. "What can we do for him? Can't we pay the bail and send him off to America?"

"A jury will never find him guilty," said Lord Lufton.

"And what is the truth of it?" asked the younger Lady Lufton.

Then the whole matter was discussed again, and it was settled among them all that Mr. Crawley had undoubtedly appropriated the cheque through temporary obliquity of judgment,—obliquity of judgment and forgetfulness as to the source from whence the cheque had come to him. "He has picked it up about the house, and then has thought that it was his own," said Lord Lufton. Had they come to the conclusion that such an appropriation of money had been made by one of the clergy of the palace, by one of the Proudiean party, they would doubtless have been very loud and very bitter as to the iniquity of the offender. They would have said much as to the weakness of the bishop and the wickedness of the bishop's wife, and would have declared the appropriator to have been as very a thief as ever picked a pocket or opened a till;—but they were unanimous in their acquittal of Mr. Crawley. It

had not been his intention, they said, to be a thief, and a man should be judged only by his intention. It must now be their object to induce a Barchester jury to look at the matter in the same light.

"When they come to understand how the land lies," said the archdeacon, "they will be all right. There 's not a tradesman in the city who does not hate that woman as though she were——"

"Archdeacon," said his wife, cautioning him to repress his energy.

"Their bills are all paid by this new chaplain they 've got, and he is made to claim discount on every leg of mutton," said the archdeacon. Arguing from which fact,—or from which assertion, he came to the conclusion that no Barchester jury would find Mr. Crawley guilty.

But it was agreed on all sides that it would not be well to trust to the unassisted friendship of the Barchester tradesmen. Mr. Crawley must be provided with legal assistance, and this must be furnished to him whether he should be willing or unwilling to receive it. That there would be a difficulty was acknowledged. Mr. Crawley was known to be a man not easy of persuasion, with a will of his own, with a great energy of obstinacy on points which he chose to take up as being of importance to his calling, or to his own professional status. He had pleaded his own cause before the magistrates, and it might be that he would insist on doing the same thing before the judge. At last Mr. Robarts, the clergyman of Framley, was deputed from the knot of Crawleian advocates assembled in Lady Lufton's drawing-room, to undertake the duty of seeing Mr. Crawley, and of explaining to him that

his proper defence was regarded as a matter appertaining to the clergy and gentry generally of that part of the country, and that for the sake of the clergy and gentry the defence must of course be properly conducted. In such circumstances the expense of the defence would of course be borne by the clergy and gentry concerned. It was thought that Mr. Robarts could put the matter to Mr. Crawley with such a mixture of the strength of manly friendship and the softness of clerical persuasion, as to overcome the recognized difficulties of the task.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BISHOP SENDS HIS INHIBITION.

TIDINGS of Mr. Crawley's fate reached the palace at Barchester on the afternoon of the day on which the magistrates had committed him. All such tidings travel very quickly, conveyed by imperceptible wires, and distributed by indefatigable message boys whom Rumour seems to supply for the purpose. Barchester is twenty miles from Silverbridge by road, and more than forty by railway. I doubt whether any one was commissioned to send the news along the actual telegraph, and yet Mrs. Proudie knew it before four o'clock. But she did not know it quite accurately. "Bishop," she said, standing at her husband's study-door, "they have committed that man to gaol. There was no help for them unless they had forsworn themselves."

"Not forsworn themselves, my dear," said the bishop, striving, as was usual with him, by some meek and ineffectual word to teach his wife that she was occasionally led by her energy into error. He never persisted in the lessons when he found, as was usual, that they were taken amiss.

"I say forsworn themselves!" said Mrs. Proudie; "and now what do you mean to do? This is Thursday, and of course the man must not be allowed to

desecrate the church of Hogglestock by performing the Sunday services."

"If he has been committed, my dear, and is in prison——"

"I said nothing about prison, bishop."

"Gaol, my dear."

"I say they have committed him to gaol. So my informant tells me. But of course all the Plumstead and Framley set will move heaven and earth to get him out, so that he may be there as a disgrace to the diocese. I wonder how the dean will feel when he hears of it! I do, indeed. For the dean, though he is an idle, useless man, with no church principles, and no real piety, still he has a conscience. I think he has a conscience."

"I 'm sure he has, my dear."

"Well;—let us hope so. And if he has a conscience, what must be his feelings when he hears that this creature whom he brought into the diocese has been committed to gaol along with common felons."

"Not with felons, my dear; at least I should think not."

"I say with common felons! A downright robbery of twenty pounds, just as though he had broken into the bank! And so he did, with sly artifice, which is worse in such hands than a crowbar. And now what are we to do? Here is Thursday, and something must be done before Sunday for the souls of those poor benighted creatures at Hogglestock." Mrs. Proudie was ready for the battle, and was even now sniffing the blood afar-off. "I believe it 's a hundred and thirty pounds a year," she said, before the bishop had collected his thoughts sufficiently for a reply.

"I think we must find out, first of all, whether he is really to be shut up in prison," said the bishop.

"And suppose he is not to be shut up? Suppose they have been weak, or untrue to their duty—and from what we know of the magistrates of Barsetshire, there is too much reason to suppose that they will have been so; suppose they have let him out, is he to go about like a roaring lion,—among the souls of the people?"

The bishop shook in his shoes. When Mrs. Proudie began to talk of the souls of the people he always shook in his shoes. She had an eloquent way of raising her voice over the word souls that was qualified to make any ordinary man shake in his shoes. The bishop was a conscientious man, and well knew that poor Mr. Crawley, even though he might have become a thief under terrible temptation, would not roar at Hogglestock to the injury of any man's soul. He was aware that this poor clergyman had done his duty laboriously and efficiently, and he was also aware that though he might have been committed by the magistrates, and then let out upon bail, he should not be regarded now, in these days before his trial, as a convicted thief. But to explain all this to Mrs. Proudie was beyond his power. He knew well that she would not hear a word in mitigation of Mr. Crawley's presumed offence. Mr. Crawley belonged to the other party, and Mrs. Proudie was a thorough-going partisan. I know a man,—an excellent fellow, who, being himself a strong politician, constantly expresses a belief that all politicians opposed to him are thieves, child-murderers, parricides, lovers of incest, demons upon the earth. He is a strong partisan, but not, I think,

so strong as Mrs. Proudie. He says that he believes all evil of his opponents; but she really believed the evil. The archdeacon had called Mrs. Proudie a she-Beelzebub; but that was a simple ebullition of mortal hatred. He believed her to be simply a vulgar, interfering, brazen-faced virago. Mrs. Proudie in truth believed that the archdeacon was an actual emanation from Satan, sent to those parts to devour souls,—as she would call it,—and that she herself was an emanation of another sort, sent from another source expressly to Barchester, to prevent such devouring, as far as it might possibly be prevented by a mortal agency. The bishop knew it all,—understood it all. He regarded the archdeacon as a clergyman belonging to a party opposed to his party, and he disliked the man. He knew that from his first coming into the diocese he had been encountered with enmity by the archdeacon and the archdeacon's friends. If left to himself he could feel and to a certain extent could resent such enmity. But he had no faith in his wife's doctrine of emanations. He had no faith in many things which she believed religiously;—and yet what could he do? If he attempted to explain, she would stop him before he had got through the first half of his first sentence.

"If he is out on bail——" commenced the bishop.

"Of course he will be out on bail."

"Then I think he should feel——."

"Feel! such men never feel! What feeling can one expect from a convicted thief?"

"Not convicted as yet, my dear," said the bishop.

"A convicted thief!" repeated Mrs. Proudie; and she vociferated the words in such a tone that the bishop resolved that he would for the future let the word con-

victed pass without notice. After all she was only using the phrase in a peculiar sense given to it by herself.

"It won't be proper, certainly, that he should do the services," suggested the bishop.

"Proper! It would be a scandal to the whole diocese. How could he raise his head as he pronounced the eighth commandment? That must be at least prevented."

The bishop, who was seated, fretted himself in his chair, moving about with little movements. He knew that there was a misery coming upon him; and, as far as he could see, it might become a great misery, a huge blistering sore upon him. When miseries came to him, as they did not infrequently, he would unconsciously endeavour to fathom them and weigh them, and then, with some gallantry, resolve to bear them, if he could find that their depth and weight were not too great for his powers of endurance. He would let the cold wind whistle by him, putting up the collar of his coat, and would encounter the winter weather without complaint. And he would be patient under the hot sun, knowing well that tranquillity is best for those who have to bear tropical heat. But when the storm threatened to knock him off his legs, when the earth beneath him became too hot for his poor tender feet, —what could he do then? There had been with him such periods of misery, during which he had wailed inwardly and had confessed to himself that the wife of his bosom was too much for him. Now the storm seemed to be coming very roughly. It would be demanded of him that he should exercise certain episcopal authority which he knew did not belong to him.

Now, episcopal authority admits of being stretched or contracted, according to the character of the bishop who uses it. It is not always easy for a bishop himself to know what he may do, and what he may not do. He may certainly give advice to any clergyman in his diocese, and he may give it in such form that it will have in it something of authority. Such advice coming from a dominant bishop to a clergyman with a submissive mind has in it very much of authority. But Bishop Proudie knew that Mr. Crawley was not a clergyman with a submissive mind, and he feared that he himself, as regarded from Mr. Crawley's point of view, was not a dominant bishop. And yet he could only act by advice. "I will write to him," said the bishop, "and will explain to him that as he is circumstanced he should not appear in the reading-desk."

"Of course he must not appear in the reading-desk. That scandal must at any rate be inhibited." Now the bishop did not at all like the use of the word inhibited, understanding well that Mrs. Proudie intended it to be understood as implying some episcopal command against which there should be no appeal;—but he let it pass.

"I will write to him, my dear, to-night."

"And Mr. Thumble can go over with the letter the first thing in the morning."

"Will not the post be better?"

"No, bishop; certainly not."

"He would get it sooner, if I write to-night, my dear."

"In either case he will get it to-morrow morning. An hour or two will not signify, and if Mr. Thumble takes it himself we shall know how it is received. It

will be well that Thumble should be there in person as he will want to look for lodgings in the parish."

"But, my dear——"

"Well, bishop?"

"About lodgings? I hardly think that Mr. Thumble, if we decide that Mr. Thumble shall undertake the duty——"

"We have decided that Mr. Thumble should undertake the duty. That is decided."

"But I do not think he should trouble himself to look for lodgings at Hogglestock. He can go over on the Sundays."

"And who is to do the parish work? Would you have that man, a convicted thief, to look after the schools, and visit the sick, and perhaps attend the dying?"

"There will be a great difficulty; there will indeed," said the bishop, becoming very unhappy, and feeling that he was driven by circumstances either to assert his own knowledge or teach his wife something of the law with reference to his position as a bishop. "Who is to pay Mr. Thumble?"

"The income of the parish must be sequestrated, and he must be paid out of that. Of course he must have the income while he does the work."

"But, my dear, I cannot sequestrate the man's income."

"I don't believe it, bishop. If the bishop cannot sequestrate it, who can? But you are always timid in exercising the authority put into your hands for wise purposes. Not sequestrate the income of a man who has been proved to be a thief! You leave that to us, and we will manage it." The "us" here named comprised Mrs. Proudie and the bishop's managing chaplain.

Then the bishop was left alone for an hour to write the letter which Mr. Thumble was to carry over to Mr. Crawley,—and after a while he did write it. Before he commenced the task, however, he sat for some moments in his arm-chair close by the fireside, asking himself whether it might not be possible for him to overcome his enemy in this matter. How would it go with him suppose he were to leave the letter unwritten, and send in a message by his chaplain to Mrs. Proudie, saying that as Mr. Crawley was out on bail, the parish might be left for the present without episcopal interference? She could not make him interfere. She could not force him to write the letter. So, at least, he said to himself. But as he said it, he almost thought that she could do these things. In the last thirty years, or more, she had ever contrived by some power latent in her to have her will effected. But what would happen, if now, even now, he were to rebel? That he would personally become very uncomfortable, he was well aware, but he thought that he could bear that. The food would become bad,—mere ashes between his teeth; the daily modicum of wine would lose its flavour; the chimneys would all smoke; the wind would come from the east, and the servants would not answer the bell. Little miseries of that kind would crowd upon him. He had arrived at a time of life in which such miseries make such men very miserable; but yet he thought that he could endure them. And what other wretchedness would come to him? She would scold him, frightfully, loudly, scornfully, and worse than all, continually. But of this he had so much habitually, that anything added might be borne also;—if only he could be sure that the scoldings should go on in pri-

vate, that the world of the palace should not be allowed to hear the revilings to which he would be subjected. But to be scolded publicly was the great evil which he dreaded beyond all evils. He was well aware that the palace would know his misfortune, that it was known, and freely discussed by all, from the examining chaplain down to the palace boot-boy;—nay, that it was known to all the diocese; but yet he could smile upon those around him, and look as though he held his own like other men,—unless when open violence was displayed. But when that voice was heard aloud along the corridors of the palace, and when he was summoned imperiously by the woman, calling for her bishop, so that all Barchester heard it, and when he was compelled to creep forth from his study, at the sound of that summons, with distressed face, and shaking hands, and short, hurrying steps,—a being to be pitied even by a deacon,—not venturing to assume an air of masterdom should he chance to meet a housemaid on the stairs,—then, at such moments as that, he would feel that any submission was better than the misery which he suffered. And he well knew that should he now rebel, the whole house would be in a turmoil. He would be bishoped here, and bishoped there, before the eyes of all palatial men and women, till life would be a burden to him. So he got up from his seat over the fire, and went to his desk and wrote the letter. The letter was as follows:—

"The Palace, Barchester, December, 186—.

"Reverend Sir,"—(he left out the dear, because he knew that if he inserted it he would be compelled to write the letter over again)—"I have heard to-day,

with the greatest trouble of spirit, that you have been taken before a bench of magistrates assembled at Silverbridge, having been previously arrested by the police in your parsonage-house at Hogglestock, and that the magistrates of Silverbridge have committed you to take your trial at the next assizes at Barchester, on a charge of theft.

"Far be it from me to prejudge the case. You will understand, reverend sir, that I express no opinion whatever as to your guilt or innocence in this matter. If you have been guilty, may the Lord give you grace to repent of your great sin, and to make such amends as may come from immediate acknowledgment and confession. If you are innocent may He protect you, and make your innocence to shine before all men. In either case may the Lord be with you and keep your feet from further stumbling.

"But I write to you now as your bishop, to explain to you that, circumstanced as you are, you cannot with decency perform the church services of your parish. I have that confidence in you that I doubt not you will agree with me in this, and be grateful to me for relieving you so far from the immediate perplexities of your position. I have, therefore, appointed the Rev. Caleb Thumble to perform the duties of incumbent of Hogglestock till such time as a jury shall have decided upon your case at Barchester; and in order that you may at once become acquainted with Mr. Thumble, as will be most convenient that you should do, I will commission him to deliver this letter into your hand personally to-morrow, trusting that you will receive him with that brotherly spirit in which he is sent upon this painful mission.

"Touching the remuneration to which Mr. Thumble will become entitled for his temporary ministrations in the parish of Hogglestock, I do not at present lay down any strict injunction. He must, at any rate, be paid at a rate not less than that ordinarily afforded for a curate.

"I will once again express my fervent hope that the Lord may bring you to see the true state of your own soul, and that He may fill you with the grace of repentance, so that the bitter waters of the present hour may not pass over your head and destroy you.

"I have the honour to be,

"Reverend Sir,

"Your faithful servant in Christ,

"T. BARNUM."*

The bishop had hardly finished his letter when Mrs. Proudie returned to the study, followed by the Rev. Caleb Thumble. Mr. Thumble was a little man, about forty years of age, who had a wife and children living in Barchester, and who existed on such chance clerical crumbs as might fall from the table of the bishop's patronage. People in Barchester said that Mrs. Thumble was a cousin of Mrs. Proudie's; but as Mrs. Proudie stoutly denied the connection it may be supposed that the people of Barchester were wrong. Had Mr. Thumble's wife in truth been a cousin, Mrs. Proudie would surely have provided for him during the many years in which the diocese had been in her hands. No such provision had been made, and Mr.

* Baronum Castrum having been the old Roman name from which the modern Barchester is derived, the bishops of the diocese have always signed themselves Barnum.

Thumble, who had now been living in the diocese for three years, had received nothing else from the bishop than such chance employment as this which he was now to undertake at Hogglestock. He was a humble, mild-voiced man when within the palace precincts, and had so far succeeded in making his way among his brethren in the cathedral city as to be employed not unfrequently for absent minor canons in chanting the week-day services, being remunerated for his work at the rate of about five shillings a service.

The bishop handed his letter to his wife, observing in an off-hand kind of way that she might as well see what he said. "Of course I shall read it," said Mrs. Proudie. And the bishop winced visibly, because Mr. Thumble was present. "Quite right," said Mrs. Proudie, "quite right to let him know that you knew that he had been arrested,—actually arrested by the police."

"I thought it proper to mention that, because of the scandal," said the bishop.

"Oh, it has been terrible in the city," said Mr. Thumble.

"Never mind, Mr. Thumble," said Mrs. Proudie. "Never mind that at present." Then she continued to read the letter. "What 's this? Confession! That must come out, bishop. It will never do that you should recommend confession to anybody, under any circumstances."

"But, my dear——"

"It must come out, bishop."

"My lord has not meant auricular confession," suggested Mr. Thumble. Then Mrs. Proudie turned round and looked at Mr. Thumble, and Mr. Thumble

nearly sank amidst the tables and chairs. "I beg your pardon, Mrs. Proudie," he said. "I did n't mean to intrude."

"The word must come out, bishop," repeated Mrs. Proudie. "There should be no stumbling-blocks prepared for feet that are only too ready to fall." And the word did come out.

"Now, Mr. Thumble," said the lady, as she gave the letter to her satellite, "the bishop and I wish you to be at Hogglestock early to-morrow. You should be there not later than ten, certainly." Then she paused until Mr. Thumble had given the required promise. "And we request that you will be very firm in the mission which is confided to you, a mission which, as of course you see, is of a very delicate and important nature. You must be firm."

"I will endeavour," said Mr. Thumble.

"The bishop and I both feel that this most unfortunate man must not under any circumstances be allowed to perform the services of the church while this charge is hanging over him,—a charge as to the truth of which no sane man can entertain a doubt."

"I 'm afraid not, Mrs. Proudie," said Mr. Thumble.

"The bishop and I, therefore, are most anxious that you should make Mr. Crawley understand at once—at once," and the lady, as she spoke, lifted up her left hand with an eloquent violence which had its effect upon Mr. Thumble, "that he is inhibited,"—the bishop shook in his shoes,—"inhibited from the performance of any of his sacred duties." Thereupon Mr. Thumble promised obedience and went his way.

CHAPTER XII.

MR. CRAWLEY SEEKS FOR SYMPATHY.

MATTERS went very badly indeed in the parsonage-house at Hogglestock. On the Friday morning, the morning of the day after his committal, Mr. Crawley got up very early, long before the daylight, and dressing himself in the dark, groped his way downstairs. His wife having vainly striven to persuade him to remain where he was, followed him into the cold room below with a lighted candle. She found him standing with his hat on and with his old cloak, as though he were prepared to go out. "Why do you do this?" she said. "You will make yourself ill with the cold and the night air; and then you, and I too, will be worse than we now are."

"We cannot be worse. You cannot be worse, and for me it does not signify. Let me pass."

"I will not let you pass, Josiah. Be a man and bear it. Ask God for strength, instead of seeking it in an over-indulgence of your own sorrow."

"Indulgence!"

"Yes, love;—indulgence. It is indulgence. You will allow your mind to dwell on nothing for a moment but your own wrongs."

"What else have I that I can think of? Is not all the world against me?"

"Am I against you?"

"Sometimes I think you are. When you accuse me of self-indulgence you are against me,—me, who for myself have desired nothing but to be allowed to do my duty, and to have bread enough to keep me alive, and clothes enough to make me decent."

"Is it not self-indulgence, this giving way to grief? Who would know so well as you how to teach the lesson of endurance to others? Come, love. Lay down your hat. It cannot be fitting that you should go out into the wet and cold of the raw morning."

For a moment he hesitated, but as she raised her hand to take his cloak from him he drew back from her, and would not permit it. "I shall find those up whom I want to see," he said. "I must visit my flock, and I dare not go through the parish by daylight lest they hoot after me as a thief."

"Not one in Hogglestock would say a word to insult you."

"Would they not? The very children in the school whisper at me. Let me pass, I say. It has not as yet come to that, that I should be stopped in my egress and ingress. They have—bailed me; and while their bail lasts, I may go where I will."

"Oh, Josiah, what words to me! Have I ever stopped your liberty? Would I not give my life to secure it?"

"Let me go, then, now. I tell you that I have business in hand."

"But I will go with you! I will be ready in an instant."

"You go? Why should you go? Are there not the children for you to mind?"

"There is only Jane."

"Stay with her, then. Why should you go about the parish?" She still held him by the cloak, and looked anxiously up into his face. "Woman," he said, raising his voice, "what is it that you dread? I command you to tell me what is it that you fear?" He had now taken hold of her by the shoulder, slightly thrusting her from him, so that he might see her face by the dim light of the single candle. "Speak, I say. What is it that you think that I shall do?"

"Dearest, I know that you will be better at home, better with me, than you can be on such a morning as this out in the cold damp air."

"And is that all?" He looked hard at her, while she returned his gaze with beseeching, loving eyes. "Is there nothing behind, that you will not tell me?"

She paused for a moment before she replied. She had never lied to him. She could not lie to him. "I wish you knew my heart towards you," she said, "with all and everything in it."

"I know your heart well, but I want to know your mind. Why would you persuade me not to go out among my poor?"

"Because it will be bad for you to be out alone in the dark lanes, in the mud and wet, thinking of your sorrow. You will brood over it till you lose your senses through the intensity of your grief. You will stand out in the cold air, forgetful of everything around you, till your limbs will be numbed, and your blood chilled,——"

"And then——?"

"Oh, Josiah, do not hold me like that, and look at me so angrily."

"And even then I will bear my burden till the Lord in His mercy shall see fit to relieve me. Even then I will endure, though a bare bodkin or a leaf of hemlock would put an end to it. Let me pass on; you need fear nothing."

She did let him pass without another word, and he went out of the house, shutting the door after him noiselessly, and closing the wicket-gate of the garden. For a while she sat herself down on the nearest chair, and tried to make up her mind how she might best treat him in his present state of mind. As regarded the present morning her heart was at ease. She knew that he would do now nothing of that which she had apprehended. She could trust him not to be false in his word to her, though she could not before have trusted him not to commit so much heavier a sin. If he would really employ himself from morning till night among the poor, he would be better so,—his trouble would be easier of endurance,—than with any other employment which he could adopt. What she most dreaded was that he should sit idle over the fire and do nothing. When he was so seated she could read his mind, as though it was open to her as a book. She had been quite right when she had accused him of over-indulgence in his grief. He did give way to it till it became a luxury to him,—a luxury which she would not have had the heart to deny him had she not felt it to be of all luxuries the most pernicious. During these long hours, in which he would sit speechless, doing nothing, he was telling himself from minute to minute that of all God's creatures he was the most heavily afflicted, and was revelling in the sense of the injustice done to him. He was recalling all the facts

of his life, his education, which had been costly, and, as regarded knowledge, successful; his vocation to the church, when in his youth he had determined to devote himself to the service of his Saviour, disregarding promotion or the favour of men; the short, sweet days of his early love, in which he had devoted himself again, —thinking nothing of self, but everything of her; his diligent working, in which he had ever done his very utmost for the parish in which he was placed, and always his best for the poorest; the success of other men who had been his compeers, and, as he too often told himself, intellectually his inferiors; then of his children, who had been carried off from his love to the churchyard,—over whose graves he himself had stood, reading out the pathetic words of the funeral service with unswerving voice and a bleeding heart; and then of his children still living, who loved their mother so much better than they loved him. And he would recall all the circumstances of his poverty,—how he had been driven to accept alms, to fly from creditors, to hide himself, to see his chairs and tables seized before the eyes of those over whom he had been set as their spiritual pastor. And in it all, I think, there was nothing so bitter to the man as the derogation from the spiritual grandeur of his position as priest among men, which came as one necessary result from his poverty. St. Paul could go forth without money in his purse, or shoes to his feet, or two suits to his back, and his poverty never stood in the way of his preaching, or hindered the veneration of the faithful. St. Paul, indeed, was called upon to bear stripes, was flung into prison, encountered terrible dangers. But Mr. Crawley,—so he told himself,—could have encountered all that with-

out flinching. The stripes and scorn of the unfaithful would have been nothing to him, if only the faithful would have believed in him, poor as he was, as they would have believed in him had he been rich! Even they whom he had most loved treated him almost with derision, because he was now different from them. Dean Arabin had laughed at him because he had persisted in walking ten miles through the mud instead of being conveyed in the dean's carriage; and yet, after that, he had been driven to accept the dean's charity! No one respected him. No one! His very wife thought that he was a lunatic. And now he had been publicly branded as a thief; and in all likelihood would end his days in a gaol! Such were always his thoughts as he sat idle, silent, moody, over the fire; and his wife well knew their currents. It would certainly be better that he should drive himself to some employment, if any employment could be found possible to him.

When she had been alone for a few minutes, Mrs. Crawley got up from her chair, and going into the kitchen, lighted the fire there, and put the kettle over it, and began to prepare such breakfast for her husband as the means in the house afforded. Then she called the sleeping servant-girl, who was little more than a child, and went into her own girl's room, and then she got into bed with her daughter.

"I have been up with your papa, dear, and I am cold."

"Oh, mamma, poor mamma! Why is papa up so early?"

"He has gone out to visit some of the brickmakers before they go to their work. It is better for him to be employed."

"But, mamma, it is pitch dark!"

"Yes, dear, it is still dark. Sleep again for a while, and I will sleep too. I think Grace will be here to-night, and then there will be no room for me here."

Mr. Crawley went forth and made his way with rapid steps to a portion of his parish nearly two miles distant from his house, through which was carried a canal, affording water communication in some intricate way both to London and Bristol. And on the brink of this canal there had sprung up a colony of brick-makers, the nature of the earth in those parts combining with the canal to make brickmaking a suitable trade. The workmen there assembled were not, for the most part, native-born Hogglestockians, or folk descended from Hogglestockian parents. They had come thither from unknown regions, as labourers of that class do come when they are needed. Some young men from that and neighbouring parishes had joined themselves to the colony, allured by wages, and disregarding the menaces of the neighbouring farmers; but they were all in appearance and manners nearer akin to the race of navvies than to ordinary rural labourers. They had a bad name in the country; but it may be that their name was worse than their deserts. The farmers hated them, and consequently they hated the farmers. They had a beershop, and a grocer's shop, and a huckster's shop for their own accommodation, and were consequently vilified by the small old-established tradesmen around them. They got drunk occasionally, but I doubt whether they drank more than did the farmers themselves on market-day. They fought among themselves sometimes, but they forgave each other freely, and seemed to have no objection to

black eyes. I fear that they were not always good to their wives, nor were their wives always good to them; but it should be remembered that among the poor, especially when they live in clusters, such misfortunes cannot be hidden as they may be amidst the decent belongings of more wealthy people. That they worked very hard was certain; and it was certain also that very few of their number ever came upon the poor-rates. What became of the old brickmakers no one knew. Who ever sees a worn-out aged navvie?

Mr. Crawley, ever since his first coming into Hogglestock, had been very busy among these brickmakers, and by no means without success. Indeed, the farmers had quarrelled with him because the brickmakers had so crowded the narrow parish church as to leave but scant room for decent people. "Doo they folk pay tithes? That 's what I want 'un to tell me," argued one farmer,—not altogether unnaturally, believing as he did that Mr. Crawley was paid by tithes out of his own pocket. But Mr. Crawley had done his best to make the brickmakers welcome at the church, scandalising the farmers by causing them to sit or stand in any portion of the church which was hitherto unappropriated. He had been constant in his personal visits to them, and had felt himself to be more a St. Paul with them than with any other of his neighbours around him.

It was a cold morning, but the rain of the preceding evening had given way to frost, and the air, though sharp, was dry. The ground under the feet was crisp, having felt the wind and frost, and was no longer clogged with mud. In his present state of mind the walk was good for our poor pastor, and exhilarated

him; but still, as he went, he thought always of his injuries. His own wife believed that he was about to commit suicide, and for so believing he was very angry with her; and yet, as he well knew, the idea of making away with himself had flitted through his own mind a dozen times. Not from his own wife could he get real sympathy. He would see what he could do with a certain brickmaker of his acquaintance.

"Are you here, Dan?" he said, knocking at the door of a cottage which stood alone, close to the towing-path of the canal, and close also to a forlorn corner of the muddy, watery, ugly, disordered brickfield. It was now just past six o'clock, and the men would be rising, as in midwinter they commenced their work at seven. The cottage was an unalluring, straight brick-built tenement, seeming as though intended to be one of a row which had never progressed beyond Number One. A voice answered from the interior, inquiring who was the visitor, to which Mr. Crawley replied by giving his name. Then the key was turned in the lock, and Dan Morris, the brickmaker, appeared with a candle in his hand. He had been engaged in lighting the fire, with a view to his own breakfast. "Where is your wife, Dan?" asked Mr. Crawley. The man answered by pointing with a short poker, which he held in his hand, to the bed, which was half screened from the room by a ragged curtain, which hung from the ceiling half-way down to the floor. "And are the Darvels here?" asked Mr. Crawley. Then Morris, again using the poker, pointed upwards, showing that the Darvels were still in their own allotted abode upstairs.

"You 're early out, Muster Crawley," said Morris,

and then he went on with his fire. "Drat the sticks, if they bean't as wut as the old 'un hisself. Get up, old woman, and do you do it, for I can't. They wun't kindle for me, nohow." But the old woman, having well noted the presence of Mr. Crawley, thought it better to remain where she was.

Mr. Crawley sat himself down by the obstinate fire, and began to arrange the sticks. "Dan, Dan," said a voice from the bed, "sure you would n't let his reverence trouble himself with the fire."

"How be I to keep him from it if he chooses? I did n't ax him." Then Morris stood by and watched, and after a while Mr. Crawley succeeded in his attempt.

"How could it burn when you had not given the small spark a current of air to help it?" said Mr. Crawley.

"In course not," said the woman, "but he be such a stoopid."

The husband said no word in acknowledgment of this compliment, nor did he thank Mr. Crawley for what he had done, nor appear as though he intended to take any notice of him. He was going on with his work when Mr. Crawley again interrupted him.

"How did you get back from Silverbridge yesterday, Dan?"

"Footed it,—all the blessed way."

"It 's only eight miles."

"And I footed it there, and that 's sixteen. And I paid one-and-sixpence for beer and grub;—s' help me, I did."

"Dan!" said the voice from the bed, rebuking him for the impropriety of his language.

"Well; I beg pardon, but I did. And they guv me two bob;—just two plain shillings, by——"

"Dan!"

"And I 'd 've arned three-and-six here at brickmaking, easy; that 's what I would. How 's a poor man to live that way? They 'll not cotch me at Barchester 'Sizes at that price; they may be sure o' that. Look there,—that 's what I 've got for my day." And he put his hand into his breeches' pocket and fetched out a sixpence. "How 's a man to fill his belly out of that? Damnation!"

"Dan!"

"Well, what did I say? Hold your jaw, will you, and not be halloaing at me that way? I know what I 'm a-saying of, and what I 'm a-doing of."

"I wish they 'd given you something more with all my heart," said Crawley.

"We knows that," said the woman from the bed. "We is sure of that, your reverence."

"Sixpence!" said the man scornfully. "If they 'd have guv' me nothing at all but the run of my teeth at the public-house, I 'd 've taken it better. But sixpence!"

Then there was a pause. "And what have they given to me?" said Mr. Crawley, when the man's ill-humour about his sixpence had so far subsided as to allow of his busying himself again about the premises.

"Yes, indeed;—yes, indeed," said the woman. "Yes, yes, we feel that; we do indeed, Mr. Crawley."

"I tell you what, sir; for another sixpence, I 'd 've sworn you 'd never guv' me the paper at all; and so I will now, if it bean't too late;—sixpence or no sixpence. What do I care? d— them."

"Dan!"

"And why should n't I? They hain't got brains enough among them to winny the truth from the lies —not among the lot of 'em. I 'll swear afore the judge that you did n't give it me at all, if that 'll do any good."

"Man, do you think I would have you perjure yourself, even if that would do me a service? And do you think that any man was ever served by a lie?"

"Faix, among them chaps it don't do to tell them too much of the truth. Look at that!" And he brought out the sixpence again from his breeches' pocket. "And look at your reverence. Only that they 've let you out for a while, they 've been nigh as hard on you as though you were one of us."

"If they think that I stole it, they have been right," said Mr. Crawley.

"It 's been along of that chap Soames," said the woman. "The lord would 've paid the money out of his own pocket and never said not a word."

"If they think that I 've been a thief, they have done right," repeated Mr. Crawley. "But how can they think so? How can they think so? Have I lived like a thief among them?"

"For the matter o' that, if a man ain't paid for his work by them as is his employers, he must pay hisself. Them 's my notions. Look at that!" Whereupon he again pulled out the sixpence, and held it forth in the palm of his hand.

"You believe, then," said Mr. Crawley, speaking very slowly, "that I did steal the money? Speak out, Dan; I shall not be angry. As you go you are honest

men, and I want to know what such of you think about it."

"He don't think nothing of the kind," said the woman, almost getting out of bed in her energy. "If he 'd athought the like o' that in his head, I 'd read 'un such a lesson he 'd never think again the longest day he had to live."

"Speak out, Dan," said the clergyman, not attending to the woman. "You can understand that no good can come of a lie." Dan Morris scratched his head. "Speak out, man, when I tell you," said Mr. Crawley.

"Drat it all," said Dan, "where 's the use of so much jaw about it?"

"Say you know his reverence is as innocent as the babe as is n't born," said the woman.

"No; I won't,—say nothing of the kind," said Dan.

"Speak out the truth," said Crawley.

"They do say, among 'em," said Dan, "that you picked it up, and then got a woolgathering in your head till you did n't rightly know where it come from." Then he paused. "And after a bit you guv' it me to get the money. Did n't you, now?"

"I did."

"And they do say if a poor man had done it, it 'd been stealing, for sartain."

"And I 'm a poor man,—the poorest in all Hogglestock; and, therefore, of course, it is stealing. Of course I am a thief. Yes; of course I am a thief. When did not the world believe the worst of the poor?" Having so spoken, Mr. Crawley rose from his chair and hurried out of the cottage, waiting no further reply from Dan Morris or his wife. And as he made

his way slowly home, not going there by the direct road, but by a long circuit, he told himself that there could be no sympathy for him anywhere. Even Dan Morris, the brickmaker, thought that he was a thief.

"And am I a thief?" he said to himself, standing in the middle of the road, with his hands up to his forehead.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BISHOP'S ANGEL.

It was nearly nine before Mr. Crawley got back to his house, and found his wife and daughter waiting breakfast for him. "I should not wonder if Grace were over here to-day," said Mrs. Crawley. "She 'd better remain where she is," said he. After this the meal passed almost without a word. When it was over, Jane, at a sign from her mother, went up to her father and asked him whether she should read with him. "Not now," he said, "not just now. I must rest my brain before it will be fit for any work." Then he got into the chair over the fire, and his wife began to fear that he would remain there all the day.

But the morning was not far advanced, when there came a visitor who disturbed him, and by disturbing him did him real service. Just at ten there arrived at the little gate before the house a man on a pony, whom Jane espied, standing there by the pony's head and looking about for some one to relieve him from the charge of his steed. This was Mr. Thumble, who had ridden over to Hogglestock on a poor spavined brute belonging to the bishop's stable and which had once been the bishop's cob. Now it was the vehicle by which Mrs. Proudie's episcopal messages were sent backwards and forwards through a twelve-mile ride

round Barchester; and so many were the lady's requirements that the poor animal by no means eat the hay of idleness. Mr. Thumble had suggested to Mrs. Proudie, after their interview with the bishop and the giving up of the letter to the clerical messenger's charge, that before hiring a gig from the Dragon of Wantley, he should be glad to know,—looking as he always did to "Mary Anne and the children,"—whence the price of the gig was to be returned to him. Mrs. Proudie had frowned at him,—not with all the austerity of frowning which she could use when really angered, but simply with a frown which gave her some little time for thought, and would enable her to continue the rebuke if, after thinking, she should find that rebuke was needed. But mature consideration showed her that Mr. Thumble's caution was not without reason. Were the bishop energetic, or even the bishop's managing chaplain as energetic as he should be, Mr. Crawley might, as Mrs. Proudie felt assured, be made in some way to pay for a conveyance for Mr. Thumble. But the energy was lacking, and the price of the gig, if the gig were ordered, would certainly fall ultimately upon the bishop's shoulders. This was very sad. Mrs. Proudie had often grieved over the necessary expenditure of episcopal surveillance, and had been heard to declare her opinion that a liberal allowance for secret service should be made in every diocese. What better could the Ecclesiastical Commissioners do with all those rich revenues which they had stolen from the bishops! But there was no such liberal allowance at present, and, therefore, Mrs. Proudie, after having frowned at Mr. Thumble for some seconds, desired him to take the grey cob. Now, Mr. Thumble had ridden

the grey cob before, and would much have preferred a gig. But even the grey cob was better than a gig at his own cost.

"Mamma, there 's a man at the gate wanting to come in," said Jane. "I think he is a clergyman."

Mr. Crawley immediately raised his head, though he did not at once leave his chair. Mrs. Crawley went to the window, and recognised the reverend visitor. "My dear, it is that Mr. Thumble who is so much with the bishop."

"What does Mr. Thumble want with me?"

"Nay, my dear; he will tell you that himself." But Mrs. Crawley, though she answered him with a voice intended to be cheerful, greatly feared the coming of this messenger from the palace. She perceived at once that the bishop was about to interfere with her husband in consequence of that which the magistrates had done yesterday.

"Mamma, he does n't know what to do with his pony," said Jane.

"Tell him to tie it to the rail," said Mr. Crawley. "If he has expected to find menials here, as he has them at the palace, he will be wrong. If he wants to come in here, let him tie the beast to the rail." So Jane went out and sent a message to Mr. Thumble by the girl, and Mr. Thumble did tie the pony to the rail, and followed the girl into the house. Jane in the mean time had retired out by the back door to the school, but Mrs. Crawley kept her ground. She kept her ground although she almost believed that her husband would prefer to have the field to himself. As Mr. Thumble did not at once enter the room, Mr. Crawley stalked to the door, and stood with it open in his hand.

Though he knew Mr. Thumble's person he was not acquainted with him, and therefore he simply bowed to the visitor,—bowing more than once or twice with a cold courtesy which did not put Mr. Thumble altogether at his ease. "My name is Mr. Thumble," said the visitor,—"The Reverend Caleb Thumble;" and he held the bishop's letter in his hand. Mr. Crawley seemed to take no notice of the letter, but motioned Mr. Thumble with his hand into the room.

"I suppose you have come over from Barchester this morning?" said Mrs. Crawley.

"Yes, madam,—from the palace." Mr. Thumble, though a humble man in positions in which he felt that humility would become him,—a humble man to his betters, as he himself would have expressed it,—had still about him something of that pride which naturally belonged to those clergymen who were closely attached to the palace at Barchester. Had he been sent on a message to Plumstead,—could any such message from Barchester palace have been possible,—he would have been properly humble in his demeanour to the archdeacon, or to Mrs. Grantly had he been admitted to the august presence of that lady; but he was aware that humility would not become him on his present mission; he had been expressly ordered to be firm by Mrs. Proudie, and firm he meant to be; and therefore, in communicating to Mrs. Crawley the fact that he had come from the palace, he did load the tone of his voice with something of dignity which Mr. Crawley might perhaps be excused for regarding as arrogance.

"And what does the 'palace' want with me?" said Mr. Crawley. Mrs. Crawley knew at once that there was to be a battle. Nay, the battle had begun. Nor

was she altogether sorry; for though she could not trust her husband to sit alone all day in his arm-chair over the fire, she could trust him to carry on a disputation with any other clergyman on any subject whatever. "What does the palace want with me?" And as Mr. Crawley asked the question he stood erect, and looked Mr. Thumble full in the face. Mr. Thumble called to mind the fact that Mr. Crawley was a very poor man indeed,—so poor that he owed money all round the country to butchers and bakers,—and the other fact, that he, Mr. Thumble himself, did not owe any money to any one, his wife luckily having a little income of her own; and, strengthened by these remembrances, he endeavoured to bear Mr. Crawley's attack with gallantry.

"Of course, Mr. Crawley, you are aware that this unfortunate affair at Silverbridge——"

"I am not prepared, sir, to discuss the unfortunate affair at Silverbridge with a stranger. If you are the bearer of any message to me from the bishop of Barchester, perhaps you will deliver it."

"I have brought a letter," said Mr. Thumble. Then Mr. Crawley stretched out his hand without a word, and taking the letter with him to the window, read it very slowly. When he had made himself master of its contents, he refolded the letter, placed it again in the envelope, and returned to the spot where Mr. Thumble was standing. "I will answer the bishop's letter," he said; "I will answer it of course, as it is fitting that I should do. Shall I ask you to wait for my reply, or shall I send it by course of post?"

"I think, Mr. Crawley, as the bishop wishes me to undertake the duty——"

"You will not undertake the duty, Mr. Thumble. You need not trouble yourself, for I shall not surrender my pulpit to you."

"But the bishop——"

"I care nothing for the bishop in this matter." So much he spoke in anger, and then he corrected himself. "I crave the bishop's pardon, and yours as his messenger, if in the heat occasioned by my strong feelings I have said aught which may savour of irreverence towards his lordship's office. I respect his lordship's high position as bishop of this diocese, and I bow to his commands in all things lawful. But I must not bow to him in things unlawful, nor must I abandon my duty before God at his bidding, unless his bidding be given in accordance with the canons of the Church and the laws of the land. It will be my duty, on the coming Sunday, to lead the prayers of my people in the church of my parish, and to preach to them from my pulpit; and that duty, with God's assistance, I will perform. Nor will I allow any clergyman to interfere with me in the performance of those sacred offices,—no, not though the bishop himself should be present with the object of enforcing his illegal command." Mr. Crawley spoke these words without hesitation, even with eloquence, standing upright, and with something of a noble anger gleaming over his poor wan face; and I think, that while speaking them, he was happier than he had been for many a long day.

Mr. Thumble listened to him patiently, standing with one foot a little in advance of the other, with one hand folded over the other, with his head rather on one side, and with his eyes fixed on the corner where the wall and ceiling joined each other. He had been told to be

firm, and he was considering how he might best display firmness. He thought that he remembered some story of two parsons fighting for one pulpit, and he thought also that he should not himself like to incur the scandal of such a proceeding in the diocese. As to the law in the matter he knew nothing himself; but he presumed that a bishop would probably know the law better than a perpetual curate. That Mrs. Proudie was intemperate and imperious, he was aware. Had the message come from her alone, he might have felt that even for her sake he had better give way. But as the despotic arrogance of the lady had been in this case backed by the timid presence and hesitating words of her lord, Mr. Thumble thought that he must have the law on his side. "I think you will find, Mr. Crawley," said he, "that the bishop's inhibition is strictly legal." He had picked up the powerful word from Mrs. Proudie, and flattered himself that it might be of use to him in carrying his purpose.

"It is illegal," said Mr. Crawley, speaking somewhat louder than before, "and will be absolutely futile. As you pleaded to me that you yourself and your own personal convenience were concerned in this matter, I have made known my intentions to you, which otherwise I should have made known only to the bishop. If you please, we will discuss the subject no further."

"Am I to understand, Mr. Crawley, that you refuse to obey the bishop?"

"The bishop has written to me, sir; and I will make known my intention to the bishop by a written answer. As you have been the bearer of the bishop's letter to me, I am bound to ask you whether I shall be

indebted to you for carrying back my reply, or whether I shall send it by course of post?" Mr. Thumble considered for a moment, and then made up his mind that he had better wait, and carry back the epistle. This was Friday, and the letter could not be delivered by post till the Saturday morning. Mrs. Proudie might be angry with him if he should be the cause of loss of time. He did not, however, at all like waiting, having perceived that Mr. Crawley, though with language cautiously worded, had spoken of him as a mere messenger.

"I think," he said, "that I may, perhaps, best further the object which we must all have in view, that namely of providing properly for the Sunday services of the church of Hogglestock, by taking your reply personally to the bishop."

"That provision is my care, and need trouble no one else," said Mr. Crawley, in a loud voice. Then, before seating himself at his old desk, he stood awhile, pondering, with his back turned to his visitor. "I have to ask your pardon, sir," said he, looking round for a moment, "because, by reason of the extreme poverty of this house, my wife is unable to offer to you that hospitality which is especially due from one clergyman to another."

"Oh, don't mention it," said Mr. Thumble.

"If you will allow me, sir, I would prefer that it should be mentioned." Then he seated himself at his desk, and commenced his letter.

Mr. Thumble felt himself to be awkwardly placed. Had there been no third person in the room he could have sat down in Mr. Crawley's arm-chair, and waited patiently till the letter should be finished. But Mrs.

Crawley was there, and of course he was bound to speak to her. In what strain could he do so? Even he, little as he was given to indulge in sentiment, had been touched by the man's appeal to his own poverty, and he felt, moreover, that Mrs. Crawley must have been deeply moved by her husband's position with reference to the bishop's order. It was quite out of the question that he should speak of that, as Mr. Crawley would, he was well aware, immediately turn upon him. At last he thought of a subject, and spoke with a voice intended to be pleasant.

"That was the schoolhouse I passed, probably, just as I came here?" Mrs. Crawley told him that it was the schoolhouse. "Ah, yes, I thought so. Have you a certified teacher here?" Mrs. Crawley explained that no government aid had ever reached Hogglestock. Besides themselves, they had only a young woman whom they themselves had instructed. "Ah, that is a pity," said Mr. Thumble.

"I,—I am the certified teacher," said Mr. Crawley, turning round upon him from his chair.

"Oh, ah, yes," said Mr. Thumble; and after that Mr. Thumble asked no more questions about the Hogglestock school. Soon afterwards Mrs. Crawley left the room, seeing the difficulty under which Mr. Thumble was labouring and feeling sure that her presence would not now be necessary. Mr. Crawley's letter was written quickly, though every now and then he would sit for a moment with his pen poised in the air, searching his memory for a word. But the words came to him easily, and before an hour was over he had handed his letter to Mr. Thumble. The letter was as follows:

"The Parsonage, Hogglestock, Dec. 186—.

"Right Reverend Lord,—I have received the letter of yesterday's date which your lordship has done me the honour of sending to me by the hands of the Reverend Mr. Thumble, and I avail myself of that gentleman's kindness to return to you an answer by the same means, moved thus to use his patience chiefly by the consideration that in this way my reply to your lordship's injunctions may be in your hands with less delay than would attend the regular course of the mail-post.

"It is with deep regret that I feel myself constrained to inform your lordship that I cannot obey the command which you have laid upon me with reference to the services of my church in this parish. I cannot permit Mr. Thumble, or any other delegate from your lordship, to usurp my place in my pulpit. I would not have you to think, if I can possibly dispel such thoughts from your mind, that I disregard your high office, or that I am deficient in that respectful obedience to the bishop set over me which is due to the authority of the Crown as the head of the church in these realms; but in this, as in all questions of obedience, he who is required to obey must examine the extent of the authority exercised by him who demands obedience. Your lordship might possibly call upon me, using your voice as bishop of the diocese, to abandon altogether the freehold rights which are now mine in this perpetual curacy. The judge of assize, before whom I shall soon stand for my trial, might command me to retire to prison without a verdict given by the jury. The magistrates who committed me so lately as yesterday, upon whose decision in that respect your lordship has taken action against me so quickly, might have equally strained their

authority. But in no case, in this land, is he that is subject bound to obey, further than where the law gives authority and exacts obedience. It is not in the power of the Crown itself to inhibit me from the performance of my ordinary duties in this parish by any such missive as that sent to me by your lordship. If your lordship think it right to stop my mouth as a clergyman in your diocese, you must proceed to do so in an ecclesiastical court in accordance with the laws, and will succeed in your object, or fail, in accordance with the evidences as to ministerial fitness or unfitness, which may be produced respecting me before the proper tribunal.

"I will allow that much attention is due from a clergyman to pastoral advice given to him by his bishop. On that head I must first express to your lordship my full understanding that your letter has not been intended to convey advice, but an order;—an inhibition, as your messenger, the Reverend Mr. Thumble, has expressed it. There might be a case certainly in which I should submit myself to counsel, though I should resist command. No counsel, however, has been given,—except indeed that I should receive your messenger in a proper spirit, which I hope I have done. No other advice has been given me, and therefore there is now no such case as that I have imagined. But in this matter, my lord, I could not have accepted advice from living man, no, not though the hands of the apostles themselves had made him bishop who tendered it to me, and had set him over me for my guidance. I am in a terrible strait. Trouble, and sorrow, and danger are upon me and mine. It may well be, as your lordship says, that the bitter waters of the present

hour may pass over my head and destroy me. I thank your lordship for telling me whither I am to look for assistance. Truly I know not whether there is any to be found for me on earth. But the deeper my troubles, the greater my sorrow, the more pressing my danger, the stronger is my need that I should carry myself in these days with that outward respect of self which will teach those around me to know that, let who will condemn me, I have not condemned myself. Were I to abandon my pulpit, unless forced to do so by legal means, I should in doing so be putting a plea of guilty against myself upon the record. This, my lord, I will not do.

"I have the honour to be, my lord,

"Your lordship's most obedient servant,

"JOSIAH CRAWLEY."

When he had finished writing his letter he read it over slowly, and then handed it to Mr. Thumble. The act of writing, and the current of the thoughts through his brain, and the feeling that in every word written he was getting the better of the bishop,—all this joined to a certain manly delight in warfare against authority, lighted up the man's face and gave to his eyes an expression which had been long wanting to them. His wife at that moment came into the room, and he looked at her with an air of triumph as he handed the letter to Mr. Thumble. "If you will give that to his lordship with an assurance of my duty to his lordship in all things proper, I will thank you kindly, craving your pardon for the great delay to which you have been subjected."

"As to the delay, that is nothing," said Mr. Thumble.

"It has been much; but you as a clergyman will feel that it has been incumbent on me to speak my mind fully."

"Oh, yes; of course." Mr. Crawley was standing up, as also was Mrs. Crawley. It was evident to Mr. Thumble that they both expected that he should go. But he had been specially enjoined to be firm, and he doubted whether hitherto he had been firm enough. As far as this morning's work had as yet gone, it seemed to him that Mr. Crawley had had the play all to himself, and that he, Mr. Thumble, had not had his innings. He, from the palace, had been, as it were, cowed by this man who had been forced to plead his own poverty. It was certainly incumbent upon him, before he went, to speak up, not only for the bishop, but for himself also. "Mr. Crawley," he said, "hitherto I have listened to you patiently."

"Nay," said Mr. Crawley, smiling, "you have indeed been patient, and I thank you; but my words have been written, not spoken."

"You have told me that you intend to disobey the bishop's inhibition."

"I have told the bishop so certainly."

"May I ask you now to listen to me for a few minutes?"

Mr. Crawley, still smiling, still having in his eyes the unwonted triumph which had lighted them up, paused a moment, and then answered him. "Reverend sir, you must excuse me if I say no,—not on this subject."

"You will not let me speak?"

"No; not on this matter, which is very private to me. What should you think if I went into your house

and inquired of you as to those things which were particularly near to you?"

"But the bishop sent me."

"Though ten bishops had sent you,—a council of archbishops if you will!" Mr. Thumble started back, appalled at the energy of the words used to him. "Shall a man have nothing of his own;—no sorrow in his heart, no care in his family, no thought in his breast so private and special to him, but that, if he happen to be a clergyman, the bishop may touch it with his thumb?"

"I am not the bishop's thumb," said Mr. Thumble, drawing himself up.

"I intended not to hint anything personally objectionable to yourself. I will regard you as one of the angels of the church." Mr. Thumble, when he heard this, began to be sure that Mr. Crawley was mad; he knew of no angels that could ride about the Barsetshire lanes on grey ponies. "And as such I will respect you; but I cannot discuss with you the matter of the bishop's message."

"Oh, very well. I will tell his lordship."

"I will pray you to do so."

"And his lordship, should he so decide, will arm me with such power on my next coming as will enable me to carry out his lordship's wishes."

"His lordship will abide by the law,—as will you also." In speaking these last words he stood with the door in his hand, and Mr. Thumble, not knowing how to increase or even to maintain his firmness, thought it best to pass out, and mount his grey pony and ride away.

"The poor man thought that you were laughing at

him when you called him an angel of the church," said Mrs. Crawley, coming up to him and smiling on him.

"Had I told him he was simply a messenger, he would have taken it worse! Poor fool! When they have rid themselves of me they may put him here, in my church; but not yet,—not yet. Where is Jane? Tell her that I am ready to commence the Seven against Thebes with her." Then Jane was immediately sent for out of the school, and the Seven against Thebes was commenced with great energy. Often during the next hour and a half Mrs. Crawley from the kitchen would hear him reading out, or rather saying by rote, with sonorous, rolling voice, great passages from some chorus, and she was very thankful to the bishop who had sent over to them a message and a messenger which had been so salutary in their effect upon her husband. "In truth an angel of the church," she said to herself as she chopped up the onions for the mutton broth; and ever afterwards she regarded Mr. Thumble as an "angel."

CHAPTER XIV.

MAJOR GRANTLY CONSULTS A FRIEND.

GRACE CRAWLEY passed through Silverbridge on her way to Allington on the Monday, and on the Tuesday morning Major Grantly received a very short note from Miss Prettyman, telling him that she had done so.

"Dear Sir,—I think you will be glad to learn that our friend Miss Crawley went from us yesterday on a visit to her friend, Miss Dale, at Allington.

"Yours truly,

"ANNABELLA PRETTYMAN."

The note said no more than that. Major Grantly was glad to get it, obtaining from it that satisfaction which a man always feels when he is presumed to be concerned in the affairs of a lady with whom he is in love. And he regarded Miss Prettyman with favourable eyes,—as a discreet and friendly woman. Nevertheless, he was not altogether happy. The very fact that Miss Prettyman should write to him on such a subject made him feel that he was bound to Grace Crawley. He knew enough of himself to be sure that he could not give her up without making himself miserable. And yet, as regarded her father, things were going from bad to worse. Everybody now said that the evidence was so strong against Mr. Crawley as to leave hardly a doubt of his

guilt. Even the ladies in Silverbridge were beginning to give up his cause, acknowledging that the money could not have come rightfully into his hands, and excusing him on the plea of partial insanity. "He has picked it up and put it by for months, and then thought that it was his own." The ladies of Silverbridge could find nothing better to say for him than that; and when young Mr. Walker remarked that such little mistakes were the customary causes of men being taken to prison, the ladies of Silverbridge did not know how to answer him. It had come to be their opinion that Mr. Crawley was affected with a partial lunacy, which ought to be forgiven in one to whom the world had been so cruel; and when young Mr. Walker endeavoured to explain to them that a man must be sane altogether or mad altogether, and that Mr. Crawley must, if sane, be locked up as a thief, and if mad, locked up as a madman, they sighed, and were convinced that until the world should have been improved by a new infusion of romance and a stronger feeling of poetic justice, Mr. John Walker was right.

And the result of this general opinion made its way out to Major Grantly, and made its way, also, to the archdeacon at Plumstead. As to the major, in giving him his due, it must be explained that the more certain he became of the father's guilt, the more certain also he became of the daughter's merits. It was very hard. The whole thing was cruelly hard. It was cruelly hard upon him that he should be brought into this trouble and be forced to take upon himself the armour of a knight-errant for the redress of the wrong on the part of the young lady. But when alone in his house, or with his child, he declared to himself that he would do

so. It might well be that he could not live in Barsetshire after he had married Mr. Crawley's daughter. He had inherited from his father enough of that longing for ascendancy among those around him to make him feel that in such circumstances he would be wretched. But he would be made more wretched by the self-knowledge that he had behaved badly to the girl he loved; and the world beyond Barsetshire was open to him. He would take her with him to Canada, to New Zealand, or to some other far-away country, and there begin his life again. Should his father choose to punish him for so doing by disinheriting him, they would be poor enough; but in his present frame of mind, the major was able to regard such poverty as honourable and not altogether disagreeable.

He had been out shooting all day at Chaldicotes, with Dr. Thorne and a party who were staying in the house there, and had been talking about Mr. Crawley, first with one man and then with another. Lord Lufton had been there, and young Gresham from Greshamsbury, and Mr. Robarts the clergyman, and news had come among them of the attempt made by the bishop to stop Mr. Crawley from preaching. Mr. Robarts had been of opinion that Mr. Crawley should have given way; and Lord Lufton, who shared his mother's intense dislike of everything that came from the palace, had sworn that he was right to resist. The sympathy of the whole party had been with Mr. Crawley;—but they had all agreed that he had stolen the money.

"I fear he 'll have to give way to the bishop at last," Lord Lufton had said.

"And what on earth will become of his children?"

said the doctor. "Think of the fate of that pretty girl; for she is a very pretty girl. It will be ruin to her. No man will allow himself to fall in love with her when her father shall have been found guilty of stealing a cheque for twenty pounds."

"We must do something for the whole family," said the lord. "I say, Thorne, you have n't half the game here that there used to be in poor old Sowerby's time."

"Have n't I?" said the doctor. "You see Sowerby had been at it all his days, and never did anything else. I only began late in life."

The major had intended to stay and dine at Chaldicotes, but when he heard what was said about Grace, his heart became sad, and he made some excuse as to his child, and returned home. Dr. Thorne had declared that no man could allow himself to fall in love with her. But what if a man had fallen in love with her beforehand? What if a man had not only fallen in love, but spoken of his love? Had he been alone with the doctor, he would, I think, have told him the whole of his trouble; for in all the county there was no man whom he would sooner have trusted with his secret. This Dr. Thorne was known far and wide for his soft heart, his open hand, and his well-sustained indifference to the world's opinions on most of those social matters with which the world meddles; and therefore the words which he had spoken had more weight with Major Grantly than they would have had from other lips. As he drove home he almost made up his mind that he would consult Dr. Thorne upon the matter. There were many younger men with whom he was very intimate,—Frank Gresham, for instance, and Lord Lufton himself; but this was an

affair which he hardly knew how to discuss with a young man. To Dr. Thorne he thought that he could bring himself to tell the whole story.

In the evening there came to him a messenger from Plumstead, with a letter from his father and some present for the child. He knew at once that the present had been thus sent as an excuse for the letter. His father might have written by the post, of course; but that would have given to his letter a certain air and tone which he had not wished it to bear. After some message from the major's mother, and some allusion to Edith, the archdeacon struck off upon the matter that was near his heart.

"I fear it is all up with that unfortunate man at Hogglestock," he said. "From what I hear of the evidence which came out before the magistrates, there can, I think, be no doubt as to his guilt. Have you heard that the bishop sent over on the following day to stop him from preaching? He did so, and sent again on the Sunday. But Crawley would not give way, and so far I respect the man; for as a matter of course, whatever the bishop did, or attempted to do, he would do with an extreme of bad taste, probably with gross ignorance as to his own duty and as to the duty of the man under him. I am told that on the first day Crawley turned out of his house the messenger sent to him,—some stray clergyman whom Mrs. Proudie keeps about the house; and that on the Sunday the stairs to the reading-desk and pulpit were occupied by a lot of brickmakers, among whom the parson from Barchester did not venture to attempt to make his way, although he was fortified by the presence of one of the cathedral vergers and by one of the

palace footmen. I can hardly believe about the verger and the footman. As for the rest, I have no doubt it is all true. I pity Crawley from my heart. Poor, unfortunate man! The general opinion seems to be that he is not in truth responsible for what he has done. As for his victory over the bishop, nothing on earth could be better.

"Your mother particularly wishes you to come over to us before the end of the week, and to bring Edith. Your grandfather will be here, and he is becoming so infirm that he will never come to us for another Christmas. Of course you will stay over the new year."

Though the letter was full of Mr. Crawley and his affairs, there was not a word in it about Grace. This, however, was quite natural. Major Grantly perfectly well understood his father's anxiety to carry his point without seeming to allude to the disagreeable subject. "My father is very clever," he said to himself, "very clever. But he is n't so clever but one can see how clever he is."

On the next day he went into Silverbridge, intending to call on Miss Prettyman. He had not quite made up his mind what he would say to Miss Prettyman; nor was he called upon to do so, as he never got as far as that lady's house. While walking up the High Street he saw Mrs. Thorne in her carriage, and, as a matter of course, he stopped to speak to her. He knew Mrs. Thorne quite as intimately as he did her husband, and liked her quite as well. "Major Grantly," she said, speaking out loud to him, half across the street; "I was very angry with you yesterday. Why did you not come up to dinner? We had a room ready for you and everything."

"I was not quite well, Mrs. Thorne."

"Fiddlestick! Don't tell me of not being well. There was Emily breaking her heart about you."

"I 'm sure Miss Dunstable——"

"To tell you the truth, I think she 'll get over it. It won't be mortal with her. But do tell me, Major Grantly, what are we to think about this poor Mr. Crawley? It was so good of you to be one of his bailmen."

"He would have found twenty in Silverbridge, if he had wanted them."

"And do you hear that he has defied the bishop? I do so like him for that. Not but what poor Mrs. Proudie is the dearest friend I have in the world, and I 'm always fighting a battle with old Lady Lufton on her behalf. But one likes to see one's friends worsted sometimes, you know."

"I don't quite understand what did happen at Hogglestock on Sunday," said the major.

"Some say he had the bishop's chaplain put under the pump. I don't believe that; but there is no doubt that when the poor fellow tried to get into the pulpit, they took him and carried him neck and heels out of the church. But tell me, Major Grantly, what is to become of the family?"

"Heaven knows!"

"Is it not sad? And that eldest girl is so nice! They tell me that she is perfect,—not only in beauty, but in manners and accomplishments. Everybody says that she talks Greek just as well as she does English, and that she understands philosophy from the top to the bottom."

"At any rate, she is so good and so lovely that one cannot but pity her now," said the major.

"You know her, then, Major Grantly? By-the-bye, of course you do, as you were staying with her at Framley."

"Yes, I know her."

"What is to become of her? I 'm going your way. You might as well get into the carriage, and I 'll drive you home. If he is sent to prison,—and they say he must be sent to prison,—what is to become of them?" Then Major Grantly did get into the carriage, and, before he got out again, he had told Mrs. Thorne the whole story of his love.

She listened to him with the closest attention; only interrupting him now and then with little words, intended to signify her approval. He, as he told his tale, did not look her in the face, but sat with his eyes fixed upon her muff. "And now," he said, glancing up at her almost for the first time as he finished his speech, "and now, Mrs. Thorne, what am I to do?"

"Marry her, of course," said she, raising her hand aloft and bringing it down heavily upon his knee as she gave her decisive reply.

"H—sh—h," he exclaimed, looking back in dismay towards the servants.

"Oh, they never hear anything up there. They 're thinking about the last pot of porter they had, or the next they 're to get. Deary me, I am so glad! Of course you 'll marry her."

"You forget my father."

"No, I don't. What has a father to do with it? You 're old enough to please yourself without asking any father. Besides, Lord bless me, the archdeacon is n't the man to bear malice. He 'll storm and threaten and stop the supplies for a month or so.

Then he 'll double them, and take your wife to his bosom, and kiss her and bless her, and all that kind of thing. We all know what parental wrath means in such cases as that."

"But my sister——"

"As for your sister, don't talk to me about her. I don't care two straws about your sister. You must excuse me, Major Grantly, but Lady Hartletop is really too big for my powers of vision."

"And Edith,—of course, Mrs. Thorne, I can't be blind to the fact that in many ways such a marriage would be injurious to her. No man wishes to be connected with a convicted thief."

"No, Major Grantly; but a man does wish to marry the girl that he loves. At least, I suppose so. And what man ever was able to give a more touching proof of his affection than you can do now? If I were you, I 'd be at Allington before twelve o'clock to-morrow, —I would indeed. What does it matter about the trumpery cheque? Everybody knows it was a mistake, if he did take it. And surely you would not punish her for that."

"No,—no; but I don't suppose she 'd think it a punishment."

"You go and ask her, then. And I 'll tell you what. If she has n't a house of her own to be married from, she shall be married from Chaldicotes. We 'll have such a breakfast! And I 'll make as much of her as if she were the daughter of my old friend the bishop himself;—I will indeed."

This was Mrs. Thorne's advice. Before it was completed, Major Grantly had been carried half-way to Chaldicotes. When he left his impetuous friend he

was too prudent to make any promise, but he declared that what she had said should have much weight with him.

"You won't mention it to anybody?" said the major.

"Certainly not, without your leave," said Mrs. Thorne. "Don't you know that I 'm the soul of honour?"

CHAPTER XV.

UP IN LONDON.

SOME kind and attentive reader may perhaps remember that Miss Grace Crawley, in a letter written by her to her friend Miss Lily Dale, said a word or two of a certain John. "If it can only be as John wishes it!" And the same reader, if there be one so kind and attentive, may also remember that Miss Lily Dale had declared, in reply, that "about that other subject she would rather say nothing,"—and then she had added, "When one thinks of going beyond friendship,—if one tries to do so,—there are so many barriers!" From which words the kind and attentive reader, if such reader be in such matters intelligent as well as kind and attentive, may have learned a great deal with reference to Miss Lily Dale.

We will now pay a visit to the John in question,—a certain Mr. John Eames, living in London, a bachelor, as the intelligent reader will certainly have discovered, and cousin to Miss Grace Crawley. Mr. John Eames at the time of our story was a young man, some seven or eight and twenty years of age, living in London, where he was supposed by his friends in the country to have made his mark, and to be something a little out of the common way. But I do not know that he was very much out of the common way, except in the fact that he had had some few thousand pounds

left him by an old nobleman, who had been in no way related to him; but who had regarded him with great affection, and who had died some two years since. Before this, John Eames had not been a very poor man, as he filled the comfortable official position of private secretary to the Chief Commissioner of the Income-tax Board, and drew a salary of three hundred and fifty pounds a year from the resources of his country; but when, in addition to this source of official wealth, he became known as the undoubted possessor of a hundred and twenty-eight shares in one of the most prosperous joint-stock banks in the metropolis, which property had been left to him free of legacy duty by the lamented nobleman aboved named, then Mr. John Eames rose very high indeed as a young man in the estimation of those who knew him, and was supposed to be something a good deal out of the common way. His mother, who lived in the country, was obedient to his slightest word, never venturing to impose upon him any sign of parental authority; and to his sister, Mary Eames, who lived with her mother, he was almost a god upon earth. To sisters who have nothing of their own,—not even some special god for their own individual worship,—generous, affectionate, unmarried brothers, with sufficient incomes, are gods upon earth.

And even up in London Mr. John Eames was somebody. He was so especially at his office; although, indeed, it was remembered by many a man how raw a lad he had been when he first came there, not so very many years ago; and how they had laughed at him and played him tricks; and how he had customarily been known to be without a shilling for the last week

before pay-day, during which period he would borrow sixpence here and a shilling there with great energy, from men who now felt themselves to be honoured when he smiled upon them. Little stories of his former days would often be told of him behind his back; but they were not told with ill-nature, because he was very constant in referring to the same matters himself. And it was acknowledged by every one at the office, that neither the friendship of the nobleman, nor the fact of the private secretaryship, nor the acquisition of his wealth, had made him proud to his old companions or forgetful of old friendships. To the young men, lads who had lately been appointed, he was perhaps a little cold; but then it was only reasonable to conceive that such a one as Mr. John Eames was now could not be expected to make an intimate acquaintance with every new clerk that might be brought into the office. Since competitive examinations had come into vogue there was no knowing who might be introduced; and it was understood generally through the establishment,—and I may almost say by the civil service at large, so wide was his fame,—that Mr. Eames was very averse to the whole theory of competition. The "Devil take the hindmost" scheme, he called it; and would then go on to explain that hindmost candidates were often the best gentlemen, and that, in this way, the Devil got the pick of the flock. And he was respected the more for this opinion, because it was known that on this subject he had fought some hard battles with the chief commissioner. The chief commissioner was a great believer in competition, wrote papers about it, which he read aloud to various bodies of the civil service,—not at all to their delight,—which he got to be printed here and

there, and which he sent by post all over the kingdom. More than once this chief commissioner had told his private secretary that they must part company unless the private secretary could see fit to alter his view, or could, at least, keep his views to himself. But the private secretary would do neither; and, nevertheless, there he was, still private secretary. "It 's because Johnny has got money," said one of the young clerks, who was discussing this singular state of things with his brethren at the office. "When a chap has got money, he may do what he likes. Johnny has got lots of money, you know." The young clerk in question was by no means on intimate terms with Mr. Eames, but there had grown up in the office a way of calling him Johnny behind his back, which had probably come down from the early days of his scrapes, and his poverty.

Now the entire life of Mr. John Eames was pervaded by a great secret; and although he never, in those days, alluded to the subject in conversation with any man belonging to the office, yet the secret was known to them all. It had been historical for the last four or five years, and was now regarded as a thing of course. Mr. John Eames was in love, and his love was not happy. He was in love, and had long been in love, and the lady of his love was not kind to him. The little history had grown to be very touching and pathetic, having received, no doubt, some embellishments from the imaginations of the gentlemen of the Income-tax Office. It was said of him that he had been in love from his early boyhood, that at sixteen he had been engaged, under the sanction of the nobleman now deceased and of the young lady's parents, that

contracts of betrothals had been drawn up, and things done very unusual in private families in these days, and that then there had come a stranger into the neighbourhood just as the young lady was beginning to reflect whether she had a heart of her own or not, and that she had thrown her parents, and the noble lord, and the contract, and poor Johnny Eames to the winds, and had——. Here the story took different directions as told by different men. Some said that the lady had gone off with the stranger, and that there had been a clandestine marriage, which afterwards turned out to be no marriage at all; others, that the stranger suddenly took himself off, and was no more seen by the young lady; others, that he owned at last to having another wife,—and so on. The stranger was very well known to be one Mr. Crosbie, belonging to another public office; and there were circumstances in his life, only half known, which gave rise to these various rumours. But there was one thing certain, one point as to which no clerk in the Income-tax Office had a doubt, one fact which had conduced much to the high position which Mr. John Eames now held in the estimation of his brother clerks,—he had given this Mr. Crosbie such a thrashing that no man had ever received such treatment before and had lived through it. Wonderful stories were told about that thrashing, so that it was believed, even by the least enthusiastic in such matters, that the poor victim had only dragged on a crippled existence since the encounter. "For nine weeks he never said a word nor eat a mouthful," said one young clerk to a younger clerk who was just entering the office; "and even now he can't speak above a whisper, and has to take all his food in pap."

It will be seen, therefore, that Mr. John Eames had about him much of the heroic.

That he was still in love, and in love with the same lady, was known to every one in the office. When it was declared of him that in the way of amatory expressions he had never in his life opened his mouth to another woman, there were those in the office who knew that this was an exaggeration. Mr. Cradell, for instance, who in his early years had been very intimate with John Eames, and who still kept up the old friendship,—although, being a domestic man, with a wife and six young children, and living on a small income, he did not go out much among his friends,—could have told a very different story; for Mrs. Cradell herself had, in days before Cradell had made good his claim upon her, been not unadmired by Cradell's fellow-clerk. But the constancy of Mr. Eames's present love was doubted by none who knew him. It was not that he went about with his stockings ungartered, or any of the old acknowledged signs of unrequited affection. In his manner he was rather jovial than otherwise, and seemed to live a happy, somewhat luxurious life, well contented with himself and the world around him. But still he had this passion within his bosom, and I am inclined to think that he was a little proud of his own constancy.

It might be presumed that when Miss Dale wrote to her friend Grace Crawley about going beyond friendship, pleading that there were so many "barriers," she had probably seen her way over most of them. But this was not so; nor did John Eames himself at all believe that the barriers were in a way to be overcome. I will not say that he had given the

whole thing up as a bad job, because it was the law of his life that the thing never should be abandoned as long as hope was possible. Unless Miss Dale should become the wife of somebody else, he would always regard himself as affianced to her. He had so declared to Miss Dale herself and to Miss Dale's mother and to all the Dale people who had ever been interested in the matter. And there was an old lady living in Miss Dale's neighbourhood, the sister of the lord who had left Johnny Eames the bank shares, who always fought his battles for him, and kept a close look-out, fully resolved that John Eames should be rewarded at last. This old lady was connected with the Dales by family ties, and therefore had means of close observation. She was in constant correspondence with John Eames, and never failed to acquaint him when any of the barriers were, in her judgment, giving way. The nature of some of the barriers may possibly be made intelligible to my readers by the following letter from Lady Julia De Guest to her young friend:

"Guestwick Cottage, December 186—.

"My dear John,—I am much obliged to you for going to Jones's. I send stamps for two shillings and fourpence, which is what I owe you. It used only to be two shillings and twopence, but they say everything has got to be dearer now, and I suppose pills as well as other things. Only think of Pritchard coming to me, and saying she wanted her wages raised, after living with me for twenty years! I was *very* angry, and scolded her roundly; but as she acknowledged she had been wrong, and cried and begged my pardon, I did give her two guineas a year more.

"I saw dear Lily just for a moment on Sunday, and upon my word I think she grows prettier every year. She had a young friend with her,—a Miss Crawley,—who, I believe, is the cousin I have heard you speak of. What is this sad story about her father, the clergyman? Mind you tell me all about it.

"It is quite true what I told you about the De Courcys. Old Lady De Courcy is in London, and Mr. Crosbie is going to law with her about his wife's money. He has been at it in one way or the other ever since poor Lady Alexandrina died. I wish she had lived, with all my heart. For though I feel sure that our Lily will never willingly see him again, yet the tidings of her death disturbed her, and set her thinking of things that were fading from her mind. I rated her soundly, not mentioning your name, however; but she only kissed me, and told me in her quiet drolling way that I did n't mean a word of what I said.

"You can come here whenever you please after the tenth of January. But if you come early in January you must go to your mother first, and come to me for the last week of your holiday. Go to Blackie's in Regent Street, and bring me down all the colours in wool that I ordered. I said you would call. And tell them at Dolland's the last spectacles don't suit at all, and I won't keep them. They had better send me down, by you, one or two more pairs to try. And you had better see Smithers and Smith, in Lincoln's Inn Fields, No. 57—but you have been there before,—and beg them to let me know how my poor dear brother's matters are to be settled at last. As far as I can see I shall be dead before I shall know what income I have got to spend. As to my cousins at the manor, I never

see them; and as to talking to them about business, I should not dream of it. She has n't come to me since she first called, and she may be *quite sure* I shan't go to her till she does. Indeed I think we shall like each other apart quite as much as we should together. So let me know when you 're coming, and *pray* don't forget to call at Blackie's; nor yet at Dolland's, which is much more important than the wool because of my eyes getting so weak. But what I want you specially to remember is about Smithers and Smith. How is a woman to live if she does n't know how much she has got to spend?

"Believe me to be, my dear John,
"Your most sincere friend,
"JULIA DE GUEST."

Lady Julia always directed her letters for her young friend to his office, and there he received the one now given to the reader. When he had read it he made a memorandum as to the commissions, and then threw himself back in his arm-chair to think over the tidings communicated to him. All the facts stated he had known before; that Lady De Courcy was in London, and that her son-in-law, Mr. Crosbie, whose wife,—Lady Alexandrina,—had died some twelve months since at Baden Baden, was at variance with her respecting money which he supposed to be due to him. But there was that in Lady Julia's letter which was wormwood to him. Lily Dale was again thinking of this man, whom she had loved in old days, and who had treated her with monstrous perfidy! It was all very well for Lady Julia to be sure that Lily Dale would never desire to see Mr. Crosbie again; but John

Eames was by no means equally certain that it would be so. "The tidings of her death disturbed her!" said Johnny, repeating to himself certain words out of the old lady's letter. "I know they disturbed me. I wish she could have lived for ever. If he ever ventures to show himself within ten miles of Allington, I 'll see if I cannot do better than I did the last time I met him!" Then there came a knock at the door, and the private secretary, finding himself to be somewhat annoyed by the disturbance at such a moment, bade the intruder enter in an angry voice. "Oh, it 's you, Cradell, is it? What can I do for you?" Mr. Cradell, who now entered, and who, as before said, was an old ally of John Eames, was a clerk of longer standing in the department than his friend. In age he looked to be much older, and there remained with him none of that appearance of the gloss of youth which will stick for many years to men who are fortunate in their worldly affairs. Indeed, it may be said that Mr. Cradell was almost shabby in his outward appearance, and his brow seemed to be laden with care, and his eyes were dull and heavy.

"I thought I 'd just come in and ask you how you are," said Cradell.

"I 'm pretty well, thank you; and how are you?"

"Oh, I 'm pretty well,—in health, that is. You see one has so many things to think of when one has a large family. Upon my word, Johnny, I think you 've been lucky to keep out of it."

"I have kept out of it, at any rate; have n't I?"

"Of course; living with you as much as I used to do, I know the whole story of what has kept you single."

"Don't mind about that, Cradell. What is it you want?"

"I must n't let you suppose, Johnny, that I 'm grumbling about my lot. Nobody knows better than you what a trump I got in my wife."

"Of course you did;—an excellent woman."

"And if I cut you out a little there, I 'm sure you never felt malice against me for that."

"Never for a moment, old fellow."

"We have all our own luck, you know."

"Your luck has been a wife and family. My luck has been to be a bachelor."

"You may say a family," said Cradell. "I 'm sure that Amelia does the best she can; but we are desperately pushed sometimes,—desperately pushed. I never was so bad, Johnny, as I am now."

"So you said the last time."

"Did I? I don't remember it. I did n't think I was so bad then. But, Johnny, if you can let me have one more fiver now I have made arrangements with Amelia how I 'm to pay you off by thirty shillings a month,—as I get my salary. Indeed I have. Ask her else."

"I 'll be shot if I do."

"Don't say that, Johnny."

"It 's no good your Johnnying me, for I won't be Johnnyed out of another shilling. It comes too often, and there 's no reason why I should do it. And what 's more, I can't afford it. I 've people of my own to help."

"But oh, Johnny, we all know how comfortable you are. And I 'm sure no one rejoiced as I did when the money was left to you. If it had ben myself I

could hardly have thought more of it. Upon my solemn word and honour if you 'll let me have it this time, it shall be the last."

"Upon my word and honour then, I won't. There must be an end to everything."

Although Mr. Cradell would probably, if pressed, have admitted the truth of this last assertion, he did not seem to think that the end had as yet come to his friend's benevolence. It certainly had not come to his own importunity. "Don't say that, Johnny; pray don't."

"But I do say it."

"When I told Amelia yesterday evening that I did n't like to go to you again, because of course a man has feelings, she told me to mention her name. 'I 'm sure he 'd do it for my sake,' she said."

"I don't believe she said anything of the kind."

"Upon my word she did. You ask her."

"And if she did, she ought n't to have said it."

"Oh, Johnny, don't speak in that way of her. She 's my wife, and you know what your own feelings were once. But look here,—we are in that state at home at this moment, that I must get money somewhere before I go home. I must, indeed. If you 'll let me have three pounds this once, I 'll never ask you again. I 'll give you a written promise if you like, and I 'll pledge myself to pay it back by thirty shillings a time out of the two next months' salary. I will, indeed." And then Mr. Cradell began to cry. But when Johnny at last took out his cheque-book and wrote a cheque for three pounds, Mr. Cradell's eyes glistened with joy. "Upon my word I am so much obliged to you! You are the best fellow that ever

lived. And Amelia will say the same when she hears of it.

"I don't believe she 'll say anything of the kind, Cradell. If I remember anything of her, she has a stouter heart than that." Cradell admitted that his wife had a stouter heart than himself, and then made his way back to his own part of the office.

This little interruption to the current of Mr. Eames's thoughts was, I think, for the good of the service, as, immediately on his friend's departure, he went to his work; whereas, had not he been thus called away from his reflections about Miss Dale, he would have sat thinking about her affairs probably for the rest of the morning. As it was, he really did write a dozen notes in answer to as many private letters addressed to his chief, Sir Raffle Buffle, in all of which he made excellently-worded false excuses for the non-performance of various requests made to Sir Raffle by the writers. "He 's about the best hand at it that I know," said Sir Raffle, one day, to the secretary; "otherwise you may be sure I should n't keep him there." "I will allow that he is clever," said the secretary. "It is n't cleverness, so much as tact. It 's what I call tact. I had n't been long in the service before I mastered it myself; and now that I 've been at the trouble to teach him I don't want to have the trouble to teach another. But upon my word he must mind his *p*'s and *q*'s; upon my word he must; and you had better tell him so." "The fact is, Mr. Kissing," said the private secretary the next day to the secretary,—Mr. Kissing was at that time secretary to the board of commissioners for the receipt of income tax—"the fact is, Mr. Kissing, Sir Raffle should never attempt to

write a letter himself. He does n't know how to do it. He always says twice too much, and yet not half enough. I wish you 'd tell him so. He won't believe me." From which it will be seen Mr. Eames was proud of his special accomplishment, but did not feel any gratitude to the master who assumed to himself the glory of having taught him. On the present occasion John Eames wrote all his letters before he thought again of Lily Dale, and was able to write them without interruption, as the chairman was absent for the day at the Treasury,—or perhaps at his club. Then, when he had finished, he rang his bell, and ordered some sherry and soda-water, and stretched himself before the fire,—as though his exertions in the public service had been very great,—and seated himself comfortably in his arm-chair, and lit a cigar, and again took out Lady Julia's letter.

As regarded the cigar, it may be said that both Sir Raffle and Mr. Kissing had given orders that on no account should cigars be lit within the precincts of the Income-tax Office. Mr. Eames had taken upon himself to understand that such orders did not apply to a private secretary, and was well aware that Sir Raffle knew his habit. To Mr. Kissing, I regret to say, he put himself in opposition whenever and wherever opposition was possible; so that men in the office said that one of the two must go at last. "But Johnny can do anything, you know, because he has got money." That was too frequently the opinion finally expressed among the men.

So John Eames sat down, and drank his soda-water, and smoked his cigar, and read his letter; or rather, simply that paragraph of the letter which referred to

Miss Dale. "The tidings of her death have disturbed her, and set her thinking again of things that were fading from her mind." He understood it all. And yet how could it possibly be so? How could it be that she should not despise a man,—despise him if she did not hate him,—who had behaved as this man had behaved to her? It was now four years since this Crosbie had been engaged to Miss Dale, and had jilted her so heartlessly as to incur the disgust of every man in London who had heard the story. He had married an earl's daughter who had left him within a few months of their marriage, and now Mr. Crosbie's noble wife was dead. The wife was dead, and simply because the man was free again, he, John Eames, was to be told that Miss Dale's mind was "disturbed," and that her thoughts were going back to things which had faded from her memory, and which should have been long since banished altogether from such holy ground.

If Lily Dale were now to marry Mr. Crosbie, anything so perversely cruel as the fate of John Eames would never yet have been told in romance. That was his own idea on the matter as he sat smoking his cigar. I have said that he was proud of his constancy, and yet, in some sort, he was also ashamed of it. He acknowledged the fact of his love, and believed himself to have out-Jacobed Jacob; but he felt that it was hard for a man who had risen in the world as he had done to be made a plaything of by a foolish passion. It was now four years ago,—that affair of Crosbie,—and Miss Dale should have accepted him long since. Half-a-dozen times he had made up his mind to be very stern to her; and he had written somewhat sternly,—but the first moment that he saw her he was

conquered again. "And now that brute will reappear, and everything will be wrong again," he said to himself. If the brute did reappear, something should happen of which the world should hear the tidings. So he lit another cigar, and began to think what that something should be.

As he did so he heard a loud noise, as of harsh, rattling winds in the next room, and he knew that Sir Raffle had come back from the Treasury. There was a creaking of boots, and a knocking of chairs, and a ringing of bells, and then a loud angry voice,—a voice that was very harsh, and on this occasion very angry. Why had not his twelve o'clock letters been sent up to him to the West End? Why not? Mr. Eames knew all about it. Why did Mr. Eames know all about it? Why had not Mr. Eames sent them up? Where was Mr. Eames? Let Mr. Eames be sent to him. All of which Mr. Eames heard standing with the cigar in his mouth and his back to the fire. "Somebody has been bullying old Buffle, I suppose. After all, he has been at the Treasury to-day," said Eames to himself. But he did not stir till the messenger had been to him, nor even then, at once. "All right, Rafferty," he said; "I 'll go in just now." Then he took half-a-dozen more whiffs from the cigar, threw the remainder into the fire, and opened the door which communicated between his room and Sir Raffle's.

The great man was standing with two unopened epistles in his hand. "Eames," said he, "here are letters——" Then he stopped himself, and began upon another subject. "Did I not give express orders that I would have no smoking in the office?"

"I think Mr. Kissing said something about it, sir."

"Mr. Kissing! It was not Mr. Kissing at all. It was I. I gave the order myself."

"You 'll find it began with Mr. Kissing."

"It did not begin with Mr. Kissing; it began and ended with me. What are you going to do, sir?" John Eames had stepped towards the bell, and his hand was already on the bell-pull.

"I was going to ring for the papers, sir."

"And who told you to ring for the papers? I don't want the papers. The papers won't show anything. I suppose my word may be taken without the papers. Since you 're so fond of Mr. Kissing——"

"I 'm not fond of Mr. Kissing at all."

"You 'll have to go back to him, and let somebody come here who will not be too independent to obey my orders. Here two most important letters have been lying here all day, instead of being sent up to me at the Treasury."

"Of course they have been lying there. I thought you were at the club."

"I told you I should go to the Treasury. I have been there all the morning with the chancellor,"—when Sir Raffle spoke officially of the chancellor he was not supposed to mean the Lord Chancellor—"and here I find letters which I particularly wanted lying upon my desk now. I must put an end to this kind of thing. I must, indeed. If you like the outer office better say so at once, and you can go."

"I 'll think about it, Sir Raffle."

"Think about it! What do you mean by thinking about it? But I can't talk about that now. I 'm very busy, and shall be here till past seven. I suppose you can stay?"

"All night, if you wish it, sir."

"Very well. That will do for the present. I would n't have had these letters delayed for twenty pounds."

"I don't suppose it would have mattered one straw if both of them remained unopened till next week."

This last little speech, however, was not made aloud to Sir Raffle, but by Johnny to himself in the solitude of his own room.

Very soon after that he went away, Sir Raffle having discovered that one of the letters in question required his immediate return to the West End. "I 've changed my mind about staying. I shan't stay now. I should have done so if these letters had reached me as they ought."

"Then I suppose I can go?"

"You can do as you like about that," said Sir Raffle.

Eames did do as he liked, and went home, or to his club; and as he went he resolved that he would put an end, and at once, to the present trouble of his life. Lily Dale should accept him or reject him; and, taking either the one or the other alternative, she should hear a bit of his mind plainly spoken.

CHAPTER XVI.

DOWN AT ALLINGTON.

It was Christmas-time down at Allington, and at three o'clock on Christmas Eve, just as the darkness of the early winter evening was coming on, Lily Dale and Grace Crawley were seated together, one above the other, on the steps leading up to the pulpit in Allington Church. They had been working all day at the decorations of the church, and they were now looking round them at the result of their handiwork. To an eye unused to the gloom the place would have been nearly dark; but they could see every corner turned by the ivy sprigs, and every line on which the holly-leaves were shining. And the greeneries of the winter had not been stuck up in the old-fashioned, idle way, a bough just fastened up here and a twig inserted there; but everything had been done with some meaning, with some thought towards the original architecture of the building. The Gothic lines had been followed, and all the lower arches which it had been possible to reach with an ordinary ladder had been turned as truly with the laurel cuttings as they had been turned originally with the stone.

"I would n't tie another twig," said the elder girl, "for all the Christmas pudding that was ever boiled."

"It 's lucky then that there is n't another twig to tie."

"I don't know about that. I see a score of places

where the work has been scamped. This is the sixth time I have done the church, and I don't think I 'll ever do it again. When we first began it, Bell and I,—before Bell was married,—Mrs. Boyce, and the Boycian establishment generally, used to come and help. Or rather we used to help her. Now she hardly ever looks after it at all."

"She is older, I suppose."

"She is a little older, and a deal idler. How idle people do get! Look at him. Since he has had a curate he hardly ever stirs round the parish. And he is getting so fat that—— H—sh! Here she is herself, —come to give her judgment upon us." Then a stout lady, the wife of the vicar, walked slowly up the aisle. "Well, girls," she said, "you have worked hard, and I am sure Mr. Boyce will be very much obliged to you."

"Mr. Boyce, indeed!" said Lily Dale. "We shall expect the whole parish to rise from their seats and thank us. Why did n't Jane and Bessy come and help us?"

"They were so tired when they came in from the coal club. Besides, they don't care for this kind of thing,—not as you do."

"Jane is utilitarian to the backbone, I know," said Lily, "and Bessy does n't like getting up ladders."

"As for ladders," said Mrs. Boyce, defending her daughter, "I am not quite sure that Bessy is n't right. You don't mean to say that you did all those in the capitals yourself?"

"Every twig, with Hopkins to hold the ladder and cut the sticks; and as Hopkins is just a hundred and one years old, we could have done it pretty nearly as well alone."

"I do not think that," said Grace.

"He has been grumbling all the time," said Lily, "and swears he never will have the laurels so robbed again. Five or six years ago he used to declare that death would certainly save him from the pain of such another desecration before the next Christmas; but he has given up that foolish notion now, and talks as though he meant to protect the Allington shrubs at any rate to the end of this century."

"I am sure we gave our share from the parsonage," said Mrs. Boyce, who never understood a joke.

"All the best came from the parsonage, as of course they ought," said Lily. "But Hopkins had to make up the deficiency. And as my uncle told him to take the hay-cart for them instead of the hand-barrow, he is broken-hearted."

"I am sure he was very good-natured," said Grace.

"Nevertheless he is broken-hearted; and I am very good-natured too, and I am broken-backed. Who is going to preach to-morrow morning, Mrs. Boyce?"

"Mr. Swanton will preach in the morning."

"Tell him not to be long, because of the children's pudding. Tell Mr. Boyce if Mr. Swanton is long, we won't any of us come next Sunday."

"My dear, how can you say such wicked things! I shall not tell him anything of the kind."

"That 's not wicked, Mrs. Boyce. If I were to say I had eaten so much lunch that I did n't want any dinner, you 'd understand that. If Mr. Swanton will preach for three-quarters of an hour——"

"He only preached for three-quarters of an hour once, Lily."

"He has been over the half-hour every Sunday since

he has been here. His average is over forty minutes, and I say it 's a shame."

"It is not a shame at all, Lily," said Mrs. Boyce, becoming very serious.

"Look at my uncle; he does n't like to go to sleep, and he has to suffer a purgatory in keeping himself awake."

"If your uncle is heavy, how can Mr. Swanton help it? If Mr. Dale's mind were on the subject he would not sleep."

"Come, Mrs. Boyce; there 's somebody else sleeps sometimes besides my uncle. When Mr. Boyce puts up his finger and just touches his nose I know as well as possible why he does it."

"Lily Dale, you have no business to say so. It is not true. I don't know how you can bring yourself to talk in that way of your own clergyman. If I were to tell your mamma she would be shocked."

"You won't be so ill-natured, Mrs. Boyce,—after all that I 've done for the church."

"If you 'd think more about the clergyman, Lily, and less about the church," said Mrs. Boyce, very sententiously, "more about the matter and less about the manner, more of the reality and less of the form, I think you 'd find that your religion would go further with you. Miss Crawley is the daughter of a clergyman, and I 'm sure she 'll agree with me."

"If she agrees with anybody in scolding me I 'll quarrel with her."

"I did n't mean to scold you, Lily."

"I don't mind it from you, Mrs. Boyce. Indeed, I rather like it. It is a sort of pastoral visitation; and as Mr. Boyce never scolds me himself, of course I take

it as coming from him by attorney." Then there was silence for a minute or two, during which Mrs. Boyce was endeavouring to discover whether Miss Dale was laughing at her or not. As she was not quite certain, she thought at last that she would let the suspected fault pass unobserved. "Don't wait for us, Mrs. Boyce," said Lily. "We must remain till Hopkins has sent Gregory to sweep the church out and take away the rubbish. We 'll see that the key is left at Mrs. Giles's."

"Thank you, my dear. Then I may as well go. I thought I 'd come in and see that it was all right. I 'm sure Mr. Boyce will be very much obliged to you and Miss Crawley. Good-night, my dear."

"Good-night, Mrs. Boyce; and be sure you don't let Mr. Swanton be long to-morrow." To this parting shot Mrs. Boyce made no rejoinder; but she hurried out of the church somewhat the quicker for it, and closed the door after her with something of a slam.

Of all persons clergymen are the most irreverent in the handling of things supposed to be sacred, and next to them clergymen's wives, and after them those other ladies, old or young, who take upon themselves semi-clerical duties. And it is natural that it should be so; for is it not said that familiarity does breed contempt? When a parson takes his lay friend over his church on a week-day, how much less of the spirit of genuflexion and head-uncovering the clergyman will display than the layman! The parson pulls about the woodwork and knocks about the stonework, as though it were mere wood and stone; and talks aloud in the aisle, and treats even the reading-desk as a common thing; whereas the visitor whispers gently, and carries himself

as though even in looking at a church he was bound to regard himself as performing some service that was half divine. Now Lily Dale and Grace Crawley were both accustomed to churches, and had been so long at work in this church for the last two days, that the building had lost to them much of its sacredness, and they were almost as irreverent as though they were two curates.

"I am so glad she has gone," said Lily. "We shall have to stop here for the next hour as Gregory won't know what to take away and what to leave. I was so afraid she was going to stop and see us off the premises."

"I don't know why you should dislike her."

"I don't dislike her. I like her very well," said Lily Dale. "But don't you feel that there are people whom one knows very intimately, who are really friends,—for whom if they were dying one would grieve, whom if they were in misfortune one would go far to help, but with whom for all that one can have no sympathy? And yet they are so near to one that they know all the events of one's life, and are justified by unquestioned friendship in talking about things which should never be mentioned except where sympathy exists."

"Yes; I understand that."

"Everybody understands it who has been unhappy. That woman sometimes says things to me that make me wish,—wish that they 'd make him bishop of Patagonia. And yet she does it all in friendship, and mamma says that she is quite right."

"I liked her for standing up for her husband."

"But he does go to sleep,—and then he scratches his nose to show that he 's awake. I should n't have

said it, only she is always hinting at uncle Christopher. Uncle Christopher certainly does go to sleep when Mr. Boyce preaches, and he has n't studied any scientific little movements during his slumbers to make people believe that he 's all alive. I gave him a hint one day, and he got so angry with me!"

"I should n't have thought he could have been angry with you. It seems to me from what you say that you may do whatever you please with him."

"He is very good to me. If you knew it all,—if you could understand how good he has been! I 'll try and tell you some day. It is not what he has done that makes me love him so,—but what he has thoroughly understood, and what, so understanding, he has not done, and what he has not said. It is a case of sympathy. If ever there was a gentleman uncle Christopher is one. And I used to dislike him so at one time!"

"And why?"

"Chiefly because he would make me wear brown frocks when I wanted to have them pink or green. And he kept me for six months from having them long, and up to this day he scolds me if there is half an inch on the ground for him to tread upon."

"I should n't mind that if I were you."

"I don't,—not now. But it used to be serious when I was a young girl. And we thought, Bell and I, that he was cross to mamma. He and mamma did n't agree at first, you know, as they do now. It is quite true that he did dislike mamma when we first came here."

"I can't think how anybody could ever dislike Mrs. Dale."

"But he did. And then he wanted to make up a marriage between Bell and my cousin Bernard. But neither of them cared a bit for the other, and then he used to scold them,—and then,—and then,—and then—— Oh, he was so good to me! Here 's Gregory at last. Gregory, we 've been waiting this hour and a half."

"It ain't ten minutes since Hopkins let me come with the barrows, miss."

"Then Hopkins is a traitor. Never mind. You 'd better begin now,—up there at the steps. It 'll be quite dark in a few minutes. Here 's Mrs. Giles with her broom. Come, Mrs. Giles; we shall have to pass the night here if you don't make haste. Are you cold, Grace?"

"No; I 'm not cold. I 'm thinking what they are doing now in the church at Hogglestock."

"The Hogglestock church is not pretty;—like this?"

"Oh, no. It is a very plain brick building, with something like a pigeon-house for a belfry. And the pulpit is over the reading-desk, and the reading-desk over the clerk, so that papa, when he preaches, is nearly up to the ceiling. And the whole place is divided into pews, in which the farmers hide themselves when they come to church."

"So that nobody can see whether they go to sleep or no. Oh, Mrs. Giles, you must n't pull that down. That 's what we have been putting up all day."

"But it be in the way, miss; so that the minister can't budge in or out o' the door."

"Never mind. Then he must stay one side or the other. That would be too much after all our trouble!" And Miss Dale hurried across the chancel to save

some prettily arching boughs, which, in the judgment of Mrs. Giles, encroached too much on the vestry door. "As if it signified which side he was," she said in a whisper to Grace.

"I don't suppose they 'll have anything in the church at home," said Grace.

"Somebody will stick up a wreath or two, I dare say."

"Nobody will. There never is anybody at Hogglestock to stick up wreaths, or to do anything for the prettinesses of life. And now there will be less done than ever. How can mamma look after holly-leaves in her present state? And yet she will miss them, too. Poor mamma sees very little that is pretty; but she has not forgotten how pleasant pretty things are."

"I wish I knew your mother, Grace."

"I think it would be impossible for any one to know mamma now,—for any one who had not known her before. She never makes even a new acquaintance. She seems to think that there is nothing left for her in the world but to try and keep papa out of misery. And she does not succeed in that. Poor papa!"

"Is he very unhappy about this wicked accusation?"

"Yes; he is very unhappy. But, Lily, I don't know about its being wicked."

"But you know that it is untrue."

"Of course I know that papa did not mean to take anything that was not his own. But, you see, nobody knows where it came from; and nobody except mamma and Jane and I understand how very absent papa can be. I 'm sure he does n't know the least in the world how he came by it himself, or he would tell

mamma. Do you know, Lily, I think I have been wrong to come away."

"Don't say that, dear. Remember how anxious Mrs. Crawley was that you should come."

"But I cannot bear to be comfortable here while they are so wretched at home. It seems such a mockery. Every time I find myself smiling at what you say to me, I think I must be the most heartless creature in the world."

"Is it so very bad with them, Grace?"

"Indeed it is bad. I don't think you can imagine what mamma has to go through. She has to cook all that is eaten in the house, and then, very often, there is no money in the house to buy anything. If you were to see the clothes she wears, even that would make your heart bleed. I who have been used to being poor all my life,—even I, when I am at home, am dismayed by what she has to endure."

"What can we do for her, Grace?"

"You can do nothing, Lily. But when things are like that at home you can understand what I feel in being here."

Mrs. Giles and Gregory had now completed their task, or had so nearly done so as to make Miss Dale think that she might safely leave the church. "We will go in now," she said; "for it is dark and cold, and what I call creepy. Do you ever fancy that perhaps you will see a ghost some day?"

"I don't think I shall ever see a ghost; but all the same I should be half afraid to be here alone in the dark."

"I am often here alone in the dark, but I am beginning to think I shall never see a ghost now. I am

losing all my romance, and getting to be an old woman. Do you know, Grace, I do so hate myself for being such an old maid."

"But who says you 're an old maid, Lily?"

"I see it in people's eyes, and hear it in their voices. And they all talk to me as if I were very steady, and altogether removed from anything like fun and frolic. It seems to be admitted that if a girl does not want to fall in love, she ought not to care for any other fun in the world. If anybody made out a list of the old ladies in these parts, they 'd put down Lady Julia and mamma, and Mrs. Boyce and me, and old Mrs. Hearn. The very children have an awful respect for me, and give over playing directly they see me. Well, mamma, we 've done at last, and I have had such a scolding from Mrs. Boyce."

"I dare say you deserved it, my dear."

"No, I did not, mamma. Ask Grace if I did."

"Was she not saucy to Mrs. Boyce, Miss Crawley?"

"She said that Mr. Boyce scratches his nose in church," said Grace.

"So he does; and goes to sleep, too."

"If you told Mrs. Boyce that, Lily, I think she was quite right to scold you."

Such was Miss Lily Dale, with whom Grace Crawley was staying—Lily Dale with whom Mr. John Eames, of the Income-tax Office, had been so long and so steadily in love that he was regarded among his fellow-clerks as a miracle of constancy,—who had, herself, in former days been so unfortunate in love as to have been regarded among her friends in the country as the most ill-used of women. As John Emaes had been able to be comfortable in life,—that is to say, not

utterly a wretch,—in spite of his love, so had she managed to hold up her head, and live as other young women live, in spite of her misfortune. But as it may be said also that his constancy was true constancy, although he knew how to enjoy the good things of the world, so also had her misfortune been a true misfortune, although she had been able to bear it without much outer show of shipwreck. For a few days,—for a week or two, when the blow first struck her, she had been knocked down, and the friends who were nearest to her had thought that she would never again stand erect upon her feet. But she had been very strong, stout at heart, of a fixed purpose, and capable of resistance against oppression. Even her own mother had been astonished, and sometimes almost dismayed, by the strength of her will. Her mother knew well how it was with her now; but they who saw her frequently, and who did not know her as her mother knew her,—the Mrs. Boyces of her acquaintance,—whispered among themselves that Lily Dale was not so soft of heart as people used to think.

On the next day, Christmas Day, as the reader will remember, Grace Crawley was taken up to dine at the big house with the old squire. Mrs. Dale's eldest daughter, with her husband, Dr. Crofts, was to be there; and also Lily's old friend, who was also especially the old friend of Johnny Eames, Lady Julia De Guest. Grace had endeavoured to be excused from the party, pleading many pleas. But the upshot of all her pleas was this,—that while her father's position was so painful she ought not to go out anywhere. In answer to this, Lily Dale, corroborated by her mother, assured her that for her father's sake she ought not to

exhibit any such feeling; that in doing so, she would seem to express a doubt as to her father's innocence. Then she allowed herself to be persuaded, telling her friend, however, that she knew the day would be very miserable to her. "It will be very humdrum, if you please," said Lily. "Nothing can be more humdrum than Christmas at the Great House. Nevertheless, you must go."

Coming out of church, Grace was introduced to the old squire. He was a thin, old man, with grey hair, and the smallest possible grey whiskers, with a dry, solemn face; not carrying in his outward gait much of the customary jollity of Christmas. He took his hat off to Grace, and said some word to her as to hoping to have the pleasure of seeing her at dinner. It sounded very cold to her, and she became at once afraid of him. "I wish I was not going," she said to Lily, again. "I know he thinks I ought not to go. I shall be so thankful if you will but let me stay."

"Don't be foolish, Grace. It all comes from your not knowing him, or understanding him. And how should you understand him? I give you my word that I would tell you if I did not know that he wishes you to go."

She had to go. "Of course I have n't a dress fit. How should I?" she said to Lily. "How wrong it is of me to put myself up to such a thing as this."

"Your dress is beautiful, child. We are none of us going in evening-dresses. Pray believe that I will not make you do wrong. If you won't trust me, can't you trust mamma?"

Of course she went. When the three ladies entered the drawing-room of the Great House they found that

Lady Julia had arrived before them. Lady Julia immediately took hold of Lily, and led her apart, having a word or two to say about the clerk in the Income-tax Office. I am not sure but what the dear old woman sometimes said a few more words than were expedient, with a view to the object which she had so closely at heart. "John is to be with us the first week in February," she said. "I suppose you 'll see him before that, as he 'll probably be with his mother a few days before he comes to me."

"I dare say we shall see him quite in time, Lady Julia," said Lily.

"Now, Lily, don't be ill-natured."

"I 'm the most good-natured young woman alive, Lady Julia, and as for Johnny, he is always made as welcome at the Small House as violets in March. Mamma purrs about him when he comes, asking all manner of flattering questions, as though he were a Cabinet minister at least, and I always admire some little knicknack that he has got, a new ring, or a stud, or a button. There is n't another man in all the world whose buttons I 'd look at."

"It is n't his buttons, Lily."

"Ah, that 's just it. I can go as far as his buttons. But come, Lady Julia, this is Christmas-time, and Christmas should be a holiday."

In the mean time Mrs. Dale was occupied with her married daughter and her son-in-law, and the squire had attached himself to poor Grace. "You have never been in this part of the country before, Miss Crawley," he said.

"No, sir."

"It is rather pretty just about here, and Guestwick

Manor is a fine place in its way, but we have not so much natural beauty as you have in Barsetshire. Chaldicote Chase is, I think, as pretty as anything in England."

"I never saw Chaldicote Chase, sir. It is n't pretty at all at Hogglestock, where we live."

"Ah, I forgot! No; it is not very pretty at Hogglestock. That 's where the bricks come from."

"Papa is clergyman at Hogglestock."

"Yes, yes; I remember. Your father is a great scholar. I have often heard of him. I am so sorry he should be distressed by this charge they have made. But it will all come right at the assizes. They always get at the truth there. I used to be intimate with a clergyman in Barsetshire of the name of Grantly;"—Grace felt that her ears were tingling, and that her face was red;—"Archdeacon Grantly. His father was bishop of the diocese."

"Yes, sir. Archdeacon Grantly lives at Plumstead."

"I was staying once with an old friend of mine, Mr. Thorne of Ullathorne, who lives close to Plumstead, and saw a good deal of them. I remember thinking Henry Grantly was a very nice lad. He married afterwards."

"Yes, sir; but his wife is dead now, and he has got a little girl,—Edith Grantly."

"Is there no other child?"

"No, sir; only Edith."

"You know him, then?"

"Yes, sir; I know Major Grantly,—and Edith. I never saw Archdeacon Grantly."

"Then, my dear, you never saw a very famous pillar of the church. I remember when people used to talk a great deal about Archdeacon Grantly; but when his

time came to be made a bishop, he was not sufficiently new-fangled; and so he got passed by. He is much better off as he is, I should say. Bishops have to work very hard, my dear."

"Do they, sir?"

"So they tell me. And the archdeacon is a wealthy man. So Henry Grantly has got an only daughter? I hope she is a nice child, for I remember liking him well."

"She is a very nice child, indeed, Mr. Dale. She could not be nicer. And she is so lovely." Then Mr. Dale looked into his young companion's face, struck by the sudden animation of her words, and perceived for the first time that she was very pretty.

After this Grace became accustomed to the strangeness of the faces round her, and managed to eat her dinner without much perturbation of spirit. When after dinner the squire proposed to her that they should drink the health of her papa and mamma, she was almost reduced to tears, and yet she liked him for doing it. It was terrible to her to have them mentioned, knowing as she did that every one who mentioned them must be aware of their misery,—for the misfortune of her father had become notorious in the country; but it was almost more terrible to her that no allusion should be made to them; for then she would be driven to think that her father was regarded as a man whom the world could not afford to mention.

"Papa and mamma," she just murmured, raising her glass to her lips.

"Grace, dear," said Lily from across the table, "here 's papa and mamma, and the young man at Marlborough who is carrying everything before him."

"Yes; we won't forget the young man at Marlbor-

ough," said the squire. Grace felt this to be good-natured, because her brother at Marlborough was the one bright spot in her family,—and she was comforted.

"And we will drink the health of my friend, John Eames," said Lady Julia.

"John Eames's health," said the squire, in a low voice.

"Johnny's health," said Mrs. Dale; but Mrs. Dale's voice was not very brisk.

"John's health," said Dr. Crofts and Mrs. Crofts in a breath.

"Here 's the health of Johnny Eames," said Lily; and her voice was the clearest and the boldest of them all. But she made up her mind that if Lady Julia could not be induced to spare her for the future, she and Lady Julia must quarrel. "No one can understand," she said to her mother that evening, "how dreadful it is,—this being constantly told before one's family and friends that one ought to marry a certain young man."

"She did n't say that, my dear."

"I should much prefer that she should, for then I could get up on my legs and answer her off the reel. Of course everybody there understood what she meant,—including old John Bates, who stood at the sideboard and coolly drank the toast himself."

"He always does that to all the family toasts on Christmas Day. Your uncle likes it."

"That was n't a family toast, and John Bates had no right to drink it."

After dinner they all played cards,—a round game,—and the squire put in the stakes. "Now, Grace," said Lily, "you are the visitor, and you must win, or else uncle Christopher won't be happy. He always likes a young lady visitor to win."

"But I never played a game of cards in my life."

"Go and sit next to him and he 'll teach you. Uncle Christopher, won't you teach Grace Crawley? She never saw a Pope Joan board in her life before."

"Come here, my dear, and sit next to me. Dear, dear, dear; fancy Henry Grantly having a little girl. What a handsome lad he was. And it seems only yesterday." If it were so that Lily had said a word to her uncle about Grace and the major, the old squire had become on a sudden very sly. Be that as it may, Grace Crawley thought that he was a pleasant old man; and though, while talking to him about Edith, she persisted in not learning to play Pope Joan, so that he could not contrive that she should win, nevertheless the squire took to her very kindly, and told her to come up with Lily and see him sometimes while she was staying at the Small House. The squire in speaking of his sister-in-law's cottage always called it the Small House.

"Only think of my winning," said Lady Julia, drawing together her wealth. "Well, I 'm sure I want it bad enough, for I don't at all know whether I 've got any income of my own. It 's all John Eames's fault, my dear, for he won't go and make those people settle it in Lincoln's Inn Fields." Poor Lily, who was standing on the hearthrug, touched her mother's arm. She knew that Johnny's name was lugged in with reference to Lady Julia's money altogether for her benefit. "I wonder whether she ever had a Johnny of her own," she said to her mother, "and, if so, whether she liked it when her friends sent the town-crier round to talk about him."

"She means to be good-natured," said Mrs. Dale.

"Of course she does. But it is such a pity when people won't understand."

"My uncle did n't bite you after all, Grace," said Lily to her friend as they were going home at night, by the pathway which led from the garden of one house to the garden of the other.

"I like Mr. Dale very much," said Grace. "He was very kind to me."

"There is some queer-looking animal of whom they say that he is better than he looks, and I always think of that saying when I think of my uncle."

"For shame, Lily," said her mother. "Your uncle, for his age, is as good a looking man as I know. And he always looks like just what he is,—an English gentleman."

"I did n't mean to say a word against his dear old face and figure, mamma; but his heart, and mind, and general disposition, as they come out in experience and days of trial, are so much better than the samples of them which he puts on the counter for men and women to judge by. He wears well, and he washes well,—if you know what I mean, Grace."

"Yes; I think I know what you mean."

"The Apollos of the world,—I don't mean in outward looks, mamma,—but the Apollos in heart, the men,—and the women too,—who are so full of feeling, so soft-natured, so kind, who never say a cross word, who never get out of bed on the wrong side in the morning,—it so often turns out that they won't wash."

Such was the expression of Miss Lily Dale's experience.

CHAPTER XVII.

MR. CRAWLEY IS SUMMONED TO BARCHESTER.

THE scene which occurred in Hogglestock church on the Sunday after Mr. Thumble's first visit to that parish had not been described with absolute accuracy either by the archdeacon in his letter to his son, or by Mrs. Thorne. There had been no footman from the palace in attendance on Mr. Thumble, nor had there been a battle with the brickmakers; neither had Mr. Thumble been put under the pump. But Mr. Thumble had gone over, taking his gown and surplice with him, on the Sunday morning, and had intimated to Mr. Crawley his intention of performing the service. Mr. Crawley, in answer to this, had assured Mr. Thumble that he would not be allowed to open his mouth in the church; and Mr. Thumble, not seeing his way to any further successful action, had contented himself with attending the services in his surplice, making thereby a silent protest that he, and not Mr. Crawley, ought to have been in the reading-desk and the pulpit.

When Mr. Thumble reported himself and his failure at the palace, he strove hard to avoid seeing Mrs. Proudie, but not successfully. He knew something of the palace habits, and did manage to reach the bishop alone on the Sunday evening, justifying himself to his lordship for such an interview by the remarkable cir-

cumstances of the case and the importance of his late mission. Mrs. Proudie always went to church on Sunday evenings, making a point of hearing three services and three sermons every Sunday of her life. On week-days she seldom heard any, having an idea that week-day services were an invention of the High-Church enemy, and that they should therefore be vehemently discouraged. Services on saints' days she regarded as rank papacy, and had been known to accuse a clergyman's wife, to her face, of idolatry, because the poor lady had dated a letter St. John's Eve. Mr. Thumble, on this Sunday evening, was successful in finding the bishop at home, and alone, but he was not lucky enough to get away before Mrs. Proudie returned. The bishop, perhaps, thought that the story of the failure had better reach his wife's ears from Mr. Thumble's lips than from his own.

"Well, Mr. Thumble!" said Mrs. Proudie, walking into the study, armed in her full Sunday-evening winter panoply, in which she had just descended from her carriage. The church which Mrs. Proudie attended in the evening was nearly half a mile from the palace, and the coachman and groom never got a holiday on a Sunday night. She was gorgeous in a dark brown silk dress of awful stiffness and terrible dimensions; and on her shoulders she wore a short cloak of velvet and fur, very handsome withal, but so swelling in its proportions on all sides as necessarily to create more of dismay than of admiration in the mind of any ordinary man. And her bonnet was a monstrous helmet with the beaver up, displaying the awful face of the warrior, always ready for combat, and careless to guard itself from attack. The large contorted bows which she

bore were as a grisly crest upon her casque, beautiful, doubtless, but majestic and fear-compelling. In her hand she carried her armour all complete, a prayer-book, a Bible, and a book of hymns. These the footman had brought for her to the study-door, but she had thought fit to enter her husband's room with them in her own custody. "Well, Mr. Thumble!" she said. Mr. Thumble did not answer at once, thinking, probably, that the bishop might choose to explain the circumstances. But neither did the bishop say anything. "Well, Mr. Thumble!" she said again; and then she stood looking at the man who had failed so disastrously.

"I have explained to the bishop," said he. "Mr. Crawley has been contumacious,—very contumacious indeed."

"But you preached at Hogglestock?"

"No, indeed, Mrs. Proudie. Nor would it have been possible, unless I had had the police to assist me."

"Then you should have had the police. I never heard of anything so mismanaged in all my life;—never in all my life." And she put her books down on the study table, and turned herself round from Mr. Thumble towards the bishop. "If things go on like this, my lord," she said, "your authority in the diocese will very soon be worth nothing at all." It was not often that Mrs. Proudie called her husband my lord, but when she did so, it was a sign that terrible times had come;—times so terrible that the bishop would know that he must either fight or fly. He would almost endure anything rather than descend into the arena for the purpose of doing battle with his wife, but occasions would come now and again when even the alternative of flight was hardly left to him.

"But, my dear——" began the bishop.

"Am I to understand that this man has professed himself to be altogether indifferent to the bishop's prohibition?" said Mrs. Proudie, interrupting her husband and addressing Mr. Thumble.

"Quite so. He seemed to think that the bishop had no lawful power in the matter at all," said Mr. Thumble.

"Do you hear that, my lord?" said Mrs. Proudie.

"Nor have I any," said the bishop, almost weeping as he spoke.

"No authority in your own diocese!"

"None to silence a man merely by my own judgment. I thought, and still think, that it was for this gentleman's own interest, as well as for the credit of the church, that some provision should be made for his duties during his present—present—difficulties."

"Difficulties indeed! Everybody knows that the man has been a thief."

"No, my dear; I do not know it."

"You never know anything, bishop."

"I mean to say that I do not know it officially. Of course I have heard the sad story; and, though I hope it may not be the——"

"There is no doubt about its truth. All the world knows it. He has stolen twenty pounds, and yet he is to be allowed to desecrate the church, and imperil the souls of the people!" The bishop got up from his chair and began to walk backwards and forwards through the room with short quick steps. "It only wants five days to Christmas Day," continued Mrs. Proudie, "and something must be done at once. I say nothing as to the propriety or impropriety of his being out on bail, as it is no affair of ours. When I

heard that he had been bailed by a beneficed clergyman of this diocese, of course I knew where to look for the man who would act with so much impropriety. Of course I was not surprised when I found that that person belonged to Framley. But, as I have said before, that is no business of ours. I hope, Mr. Thumble, that the bishop will never be found interfering with the ordinary laws of the land. I am very sure that he will never do so by my advice. But when there comes a question of inhibiting a clergyman who has committed himself as this clergyman unfortunately has done, then I say that that clergyman ought to be inhibited." The bishop walked up and down the room throughout the whole of this speech, but gradually his steps became quicker, and his turns became shorter. "And now here is Christmas Day upon us, and what is to be done?" With these words Mrs. Proudie finished her speech.

"Mr. Thumble," said the bishop, "perhaps you had better now retire. I am very sorry that you should have had so thankless and so disagreeable a task."

"Why should Mr. Thumble retire?" asked Mrs. Proudie.

"I think it better," said the bishop. "Mr. Thumble, good-night." Then Mr. Thumble did retire, and Mrs. Proudie stood forth in her full panoply of armour, silent and awful, with her helmet erect, and vouchsafed no recognition whatever of the parting salutation with which Mr. Thumble greeted her. "My dear, the truth is, you do not understand the matter," said the bishop as soon as the door was closed. "You do not know how limited is my power."

"Bishop, I understand it a great deal better than

some people; and I understand also what is due to myself and the manner in which I ought to be treated by you in the presence of the subordinate clergy of the diocese. I shall not, however, remain here to be insulted either in the presence or in the absence of any one." Then the conquered amazon collected together the weapons which she had laid upon the table, and took her departure with majestic step, and not without the clang of arms. The bishop, when he was left alone, enjoyed for a few moments the triumph of his victory.

But then he was left so very much alone! When he looked round about him upon his solitude after the departure of his wife, and remembered that he should not see her again till he should encounter her on ground that was all her own, he regretted his own success, and was tempted to follow her and to apologise. He was unable to do anything alone. He would not even know how to get his tea, as the very servants would ask questions, if he were to do so unaccustomed a thing as to order it to be brought up to him in his solitude. They would tell him that Mrs. Proudie was having tea in her little sitting-room upstairs, or else that the things were laid in the drawing-room. He did wander forth to the latter apartment, hoping that he might find his wife there; but the drawing-room was dark and deserted, and so he wandered back again. It was a grand thing certainly to have triumphed over his wife, and there was a crumb of comfort in the thought that he had vindicated himself before Mr. Thumble; but the general result was not comforting, and he knew from of old how short-lived his triumph would be.

But wretched as he was during that evening he did employ himself with some energy. After much thought

he resolved that he would again write to Mr. Crawley, and summon him to appear at the palace. In doing this he would at any rate be doing something. There would be action. And though Mr. Crawley would, as he thought, decline to obey the order, something would be gained even by that disobedience. So he wrote his summons,—sitting very comfortless and all alone on that Sunday evening,—dating his letter, however, for the following day:—

"Palace, December 20, 186—.

"Reverend Sir,—I have just heard from Mr. Thumble that you have declined to accede to the advice which I thought it my duty to tender to you as the bishop who has been set over you by the church, and that you yesterday insisted on what you believed to be your right to administer the services in the parish church of Hogglestock. This has occasioned me the deepest regret. It is, I think, unavailing that I should further write to you my mind upon the subject, as I possess such strong evidence that my written word will not be respected by you. I have, therefore, no alternative now but to invite you to come to me here; and this I do, hoping that I may induce you to listen to that authority which I cannot but suppose you acknowledge to be vested in the office which I hold.

"I shall be glad to see you on to-morrow, Tuesday, as near the hour of two as you can make it convenient to yourself to be here, and I will take care to order that refreshment shall be provided for yourself and your horse.

"I am, Reverend Sir,

"&c. &c. &c.

"Thos. Barnum."

"My dear," he said, when he did again encounter his wife that night, "I have written to Mr. Crawley, and I thought I might as well bring up the copy of my letter."

"I wash my hands of the whole affair," said Mrs. Proudie—"of the whole affair!"

"But you will look at the letter?"

"Certainly not. Why should I look at the letter? My word goes for nothing. I have done what I could, but in vain. Now let us see how you will manage it yourself."

The bishop did not pass a comfortable night; but in the morning his wife did read his letter and after that things went a little smoother with him. She was pleased to say that, considering all things;—seeing, as she could not help seeing, that the matter had been dreadfully mismanaged, and that great weakness had been displayed;—seeing that these faults had already been committed, perhaps no better step could now be taken than that proposed in the letter.

"I suppose he will not come," said the bishop.

"I think he will," said Mrs. Proudie, "and I trust that we may be able to convince him that obedience will be his best course. He will be more humble-minded here than at Hogglestock." In saying this the lady showed some knowledge of the general nature of clergymen and of the world at large. She understood how much louder a cock can crow in its own farm-yard than elsewhere, and knew that episcopal authority backed by all the solemn awe of palatial grandeur goes much further than it will do when sent under the folds of an ordinary envelope. But though

she understood ordinary human nature, it may be that she did not understand Mr. Crawley's nature.

But she was at any rate right in her idea as to Mr. Crawley's immediate reply. The palace groom who rode over to Hogglestock returned with an immediate answer.

"My Lord," (said Mr. Crawley),—"I will obey your lordship's summons, and, unless impediments should arise, I will wait upon your lordship at the hour you name to-morrow. I will not trespass on your hospitality. For myself, I rarely break bread in any house but my own; and as to the horse, I have none.

"I have the honour to be,

"My lord, &c. &c.

"JOSIAH CRAWLEY."

"Of course I shall go," he had said to his wife as soon as he had had time to read the letter, and make known to her the contents. "I shall go if it be possible for me to get there. I think that I am bound to comply with the bishop's wishes in so much as that."

"But how will you get there, Josiah?"

"I will walk,—with the Lord's aid."

Now Hogglestock was fifteen miles from Barchester, and Mr. Crawley was, as his wife well knew, by no means fitted in his present state for great physical exertion. But from the tone in which he had replied to her, she well knew that it would not avail for her to remonstrate at the moment. He had walked more than thirty miles in a day since they had been living at Hogglestock, and she did not doubt but that it might be possible for him to do it again. Any scheme which

she might be able to devise for saving him from so terrible a journey in the middle of winter, must be pondered over silently, and brought to bear, if not slyly, at least deftly, and without discussion. She made no reply therefore when he declared that on the following day he would walk to Barchester and back, —with the Lord's aid; nor did she see, or ask to see, the note which he sent to the bishop. When the messenger was gone, Mr. Crawley was all alert, looking forward with evident glee to his encounter with the bishop,—snorting like a race-horse at the expected triumph of the coming struggle. And he read much Greek with Jane on that afternoon, pouring into her young ears, almost with joyous rapture, his appreciation of the glory and the pathos and the humanity, as also of the awful tragedy, of the story of Œdipus. His very soul was on fire at the idea of clutching the weak bishop in his hand, and crushing him with his strong grasp.

In the afternoon Mrs. Crawley slipped out to a neighbouring farmer's wife, and returned in an hour's time with a little story which she did not tell with any appearance of eager satisfaction. She had learned well what were the little tricks necessary to the carrying of such a matter as that which she had now in hand. Mr. Mangle, the farmer, as it happened, was going to-morrow morning in his tax-cart as far as Framley Mill, and would be delighted if Mr. Crawley would take a seat. He must remain at Framley the best part of the afternoon, and hoped that Mr. Crawley would take a seat back again. Now Framley Mill was only half a mile off the direct road to Barchester, and was almost half-way from Hogglestock parsonage to the city. This

would, at any rate, bring the walk within a practicable distance. Mr. Crawley was instantly placed upon his guard, like an animal that sees the bait and suspects the trap. Had he been told that farmer Mangle was going all the way to Barchester, nothing would have induced him to get into the cart. He would have felt sure that farmer Mangle had been persuaded to pity him in his poverty and his strait, and he would sooner have started to walk to London than have put a foot upon the step of the cart. But this lift half-way did look to him as though it were really fortuitous. His wife could hardly have been cunning enough to persuade the farmer to go to Framley, conscious that the trap would have been suspected had the bait been made more full. But I fear,—I fear the dear good woman had been thus cunning,—had understood how far the trap might be baited, and had thus succeeded in catching her prey.

On the following morning he consented to get into farmer Mangle's cart, and was driven as far as Framley Mill. "I would n't think nowt, your reverence, of running you over into Barchester,—that I would n't. The powny is so mortial good," said farmer Mangle in his foolish good-nature.

"And how about your business here?" said Mr. Crawley. The farmer scratched his head, remembering all Mrs. Crawley's injunctions, and awkwardly acknowledged that to be sure his own business with the miller was very pressing. Then Mr. Crawley descended, terribly suspicious, and went on his journey.

"Anyways, your reverence will call for me coming back?" said farmer Mangle. But Mr. Crawley would make no promise. He bade the farmer not wait for

him. If they chanced to meet together on the road he might get up again. If the man really had business at Framley, how could he have offered to go on to Barchester? Were they deceiving him? The wife of his bosom had deceived him in such matters before now. But his trouble in this respect was soon dissipated by the pride of his anticipated triumph over the bishop. He took great glory from the thought that he would go before the bishop with dirty boots—with boots necessarily dirty,—with rusty pantaloons, that he would be hot and mud-stained with his walk, hungry, and an object to be wondered at by all who should see him, because of the misfortunes which had been unworthily heaped upon his head; whereas the bishop would be sleek and clean and well-fed,—pretty with all the prettinesses that are becoming to a bishop's outward man. And he, Mr. Crawley, would be humble, whereas the bishop would be very proud. And the bishop would be in his own arm-chair,—the cock in his own farmyard, while he, Mr. Crawley, would be seated afar off, in the cold extremity of the room, with nothing of outward circumstances to assist him,—a man called thither to undergo censure. And yet he would take the bishop in his grasp and crush him,—crush him,—crush him! As he thought of this he walked quickly through the mud, and put out his long arm and his great hand, far before him out into the air, and, there and then, he crushed the bishop in his imagination. Yes, indeed! He thought it very doubtful whether the bishop would ever send for him a second time. As all this passed through his mind, he forgot his wife's cunning, and farmer Mangle's sin, and for the moment he was happy.

As he turned a corner round by Lord Lufton's park

paling, who should he meet but his old friend Mr. Robarts, the parson of Framley,—the parson who had committed the sin of being bail for him,—the sin, that is, according to Mrs. Proudie's view of the matter. He was walking with his hand still stretched out,—still crushing the bishop, when Mr. Robarts was close upon him.

"What, Crawley! upon my word I am very glad to see you; you are coming up to me, of course?"

"Thank you, Mr. Robarts; no, not to-day. The bishop has summoned me to his presence, and I am on my road to Barchester."

"But how are you going?"

"I shall walk."

"Walk to Barchester. Impossible!"

"I hope not quite impossible, Mr. Robarts. I trust I shall get as far before two o'clock; but to do so I must be on my road." Then he showed signs of a desire to go on upon his way without further parley.

"But, Crawley, do let me send you over. There is the horse and gig doing nothing."

"Thank you, Mr. Robarts; no. I should prefer the walk to-day."

"And you have walked from Hogglestock?"

"No;—not so. A neighbour coming hither, who happened to have business at your mill,—he brought me so far in his cart. The walk home will be nothing,—nothing. I shall enjoy it. Good-morning, Mr. Robarts."

But Mr. Robarts thought of the dirty road, and of the bishop's presence, and of his own ideas of what would be becoming for a clergyman,—and persevered. "You will find the lanes so very muddy; and our

bishop, you know, is apt to notice such things. Do be persuaded."

"Notice what things?" demanded Mr. Crawley, in an indignant tone.

"He, or perhaps she rather, will say how dirty your shoes were when you came to the palace."

"If he, or she, can find nothing unclean about me but my shoes, let them say their worst. I shall be very indifferent. I have long ceased, Mr. Robarts, to care much what any man or woman may say about my shoes. Good-morning." Then he stalked on, clutching and crushing in his hand the bishop, and the bishop's wife, and the whole diocese, and all the Church of England. Dirty shoes, indeed! Whose was the fault that there were in the church so many feet soiled by unmerited poverty, and so many hands soiled by undeserved wealth? If the bishop did not like his shoes, let the bishop dare to tell him so! So he walked on through the thick of the mud, by no means picking his way.

He walked fast, and he found himself in the close half an hour before the time named by the bishop. But on no account would he have rung the palace bell one minute before two o'clock. So he walked up and down under the towers of the cathedral, and cooled himself, and looked up at the pleasant plate-glass in the windows of the house of his friend the dean, and told himself how, in their college days, he and the dean had been quite equal,—quite equal, except that by the voices of all qualified judges in the university, he, Mr. Crawley, had been acknowledged to be the riper scholar. And now the Mr. Arabin of those days was Dean of Barchester,—travelling abroad luxuriously at

this moment for his delight, while he, Crawley, was perpetual curate at Hogglestock, and had now walked into Barchester at the command of the bishop, because he was suspected of having stolen twenty pounds! When he had fully imbued his mind with the injustice of all this, his time was up, and he walked boldly to the bishop's gate, and boldly rang the bishop's bell.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE BISHOP OF BARCHESTER IS CRUSHED.

WHO inquires why it is that a little greased flour rubbed in among the hair on a footman's head,—just one dab here and another there,—gives such a tone of high life to the family? And seeing that the thing is so easily done, why do not more people attempt it? The tax on hair-powder is but thirteen shillings a year. It may, indeed, be that the slightest dab in the world justifies the wearer in demanding hot meat three times a day, and wine at any rate on Sundays. I think, however, that a bishop's wife may enjoy the privilege without such heavy attendant expense; otherwise the man who opened the bishop's door to Mr. Crawley would hardly have been so ornamented.

The man asked for a card. "My name is Mr. Crawley," said our friend. "The bishop has desired me to come to him at this hour. Will you be pleased to tell him that I am here." The man again asked for a card. "I am not bound to carry with me my name printed on a ticket," said Mr. Crawley. "If you cannot remember it, give me pen and paper, and I will write it." The servant, somewhat awed by the stranger's manner, brought the pen and paper, and Mr. Crawley wrote his name—

"THE REV. JOSIAH CRAWLEY, M.A.,
Perpetual Curate of Hogglestock."

He was then ushered into a waiting-room, but, to his disappointment, was not kept there waiting long. Within three minutes he was ushered into the bishop's study, and into the presence of the two great luminaries of the diocese. He was at first somewhat disconcerted by finding Mrs. Proudie in the room. In the imaginary conversation with the bishop which he had been preparing on the road, he had conceived that the bishop would be attended by a chaplain, and he had suited his words to the joint discomfiture of the bishop and of the lower clergyman; but now the line of his battle must be altered. This was no doubt an injury, but he trusted to his courage and readiness to enable him to surmount it. He had left his hat behind him in the waiting-room, but he kept his old short cloak still upon his shoulders; and when he entered the bishop's room his hands and arms were hid beneath it. There was something lowly in this constrained gait. It showed at least that he had no idea of being asked to shake hands with the august persons he might meet. And his head was somewhat bowed, though his great, bald, broad forehead showed itself so prominent, that neither the bishop nor Mrs. Proudie could drop it from their sight during the whole interview. He was a man who when seen could hardly be forgotten. The deep angry remonstrant eyes, the shaggy eyebrows, telling tales of frequent anger,—of anger frequent but generally silent,—the repressed indignation of the habitual frown, the long nose and large powerful mouth, the deep furrows on the cheek, and the general look of thought and suffering, all combined to make the appearance of the man remarkable, and to describe to the beholders at once his true character. No one ever

on seeing Mr. Crawley took him to be a happy man, or a weak man, or an ignorant man, or a wise man.

"You are very punctual, Mr. Crawley," said the bishop. Mr. Crawley simply bowed his head, still keeping his hands beneath his cloak. "Will you not take a chair nearer to the fire?" Mr. Crawley had not seated himself, but had placed himself in front of a chair at the extreme end of the room, resolved that he would not use it unless he were duly asked. Now he seated himself,—still at a distance.

"Thank you, my lord," he said, "I am warm with walking, and, if you please, will avoid the fire."

"You have not walked, Mr. Crawley?"

"Yes, my lord. I have been walking."

"Not from Hogglestock!"

Now this was a matter which Mr. Crawley certainly did not mean to discuss with the bishop. It might be well for the bishop to demand his presence in the palace, but it could be no part of the bishop's duty to inquire how he got there. "That, my lord, is a matter of no moment," said he. "I am glad at any rate that I have been enabled to obey your lordship's order in coming hither on this morning."

Hitherto Mrs. Proudie had not said a word. She stood back in the room, near the fire,—more backward a good deal than she was accustomed to do when clergymen made their ordinary visits. On such occasions she would come forward and shake hands with them graciously,—graciously even, if proudly; but she had felt that she must do nothing of that kind now; there must be no shaking hands with a man who had stolen a cheque for twenty pounds! It might probably be necessary to keep Mr. Crawley at a distance, and

therefore she had remained in the background. But Mr. Crawley seemed to be disposed to keep himself in the background, and therefore she could speak. "I hope your wife and children are well, Mr. Crawley?" she said.

"Thank you, madam, my children are well, and Mrs. Crawley suffers no special ailment at present."

"That is much to be thankful for, Mr. Crawley." Whether he were or were not thankful for such mercies as these was no business of the bishop or of the bishop's wife. That was between him and his God. So he would not even bow to this civility, but sat with his head erect, and with a great frown on his heavy brow.

Then the bishop rose from his chair to speak, intending to take up a position on the rug. But as he did so Mr. Crawley rose also, and the bishop found that he would thus lose his expected vantage. "Will you not be seated, Mr. Crawley?" said the bishop. Mr. Crawley smiled, but stood his ground. Then the bishop returned to his arm-chair, and Mr. Crawley also sat down again. "Mr. Crawley," began the bishop, "this matter which came the other day before the magistrates at Silverbridge has been a most unfortunate affair. It has given me, I can assure you, the most sincere pain."

Mr. Crawley had made up his mind how far the bishop should be allowed to go without a rebuke. He had told himself that it would only be natural, and would not be unbecoming, that the bishop should allude to the meeting of the magistrates and to the alleged theft, and that therefore such allusion should be endured with patient humility. And, moreover, the

more rope he gave the bishop, the more likely the bishop would be to entangle himself. It certainly was Mr. Crawley's wish that the bishop should entangle himself. He, therefore, replied very meekly, "It has been most unfortunate, my lord."

"I have felt for Mrs. Crawley very deeply," said Mrs. Proudie. Mr. Crawley had now made up his mind that as long as it was possible he would ignore the presence of Mrs. Proudie altogether; and, therefore, he made no sign that he heard the latter remark.

"It has been most unfortunate," continued the bishop. "I have never before had a clergyman in my diocese placed in so distressing a position."

"That is a matter of opinion, my lord," said Mr. Crawley, who at that moment thought of a crisis which had come in the life of another clergyman in the diocese of Barchester, with the circumstances of which he had by chance been made acquainted.

"Exactly," said the bishop. "And I am expressing my opinion." Mr. Crawley, who understood fighting, did not think that the time had yet come for striking a blow, so he simply bowed again. "A most unfortunate position, Mr. Crawley," continued the bishop. "Far be it from me to express an opinion upon the matter, which will have to come before a jury of your countrymen. It is enough for me to know that the magistrates assembled at Silverbridge, gentlemen to whom no doubt you must be known, as most of them live in your neighbourhood, have heard evidence upon the subject——"

"Most convincing evidence," said Mrs. Proudie, interrupting her husband. Mr. Crawley's black brow became a little blacker as he heard the word, but still

he ignored the woman. He not only did not speak, but did not turn his eye upon her.

"They have heard the evidence on the subject," continued the bishop, "and they have thought it proper to refer the decision as to your innocence or your guilt to a jury of your countrymen."

"And they were right," said Mr. Crawley.

"Very possibly. I don't deny it. Probably," said the bishop, whose eloquence was somewhat disturbed by Mr. Crawley's ready acquiescence.

"Of course they were right," said Mrs. Proudie.

"At any rate it is so," said the bishop. "You are in the position of a man amenable to the criminal laws of the land."

"There are no criminal laws, my lord," said Mr. Crawley; "but to such laws as there are we are all amenable,—your lordship and I alike."

"But you are so in a very particular way. I do not wish to remind you what might be your condition now, but for the interposition of private friends."

"I should be in the condition of a man not guilty before the law,—guiltless, as far as the law goes,—but kept in durance, not for faults of his own, but because otherwise, by reason of laches in the police, his presence at the assizes might not be ensured. In such a position a man's reputation is made to hang for a while on the trust which some friends or neighbours may have in it. I do not say that the test is a good one."

"You would have been put in prison, Mr. Crawley, because the magistrates were of the opinion that you had taken Mr. Soames's cheque," said Mrs. Proudie. On this occasion he did look at her. He turned one

glance upon her from under his eyebrows, but he did not speak.

"With all that I have nothing to do," said the bishop.

"Nothing whatever, my lord," said Mr. Crawley.

"But, bishop, I think that you have," said Mrs. Proudie. "The judgment formed by the magistrates as to the conduct of one of your clergymen makes it imperative upon you to act in the matter."

"Yes, my dear, yes; I am coming to that. What Mrs. Proudie says is perfectly true. I have been constrained most unwillingly to take action in this matter. It is undoubtedly the fact that you must at the next assizes surrender yourself at the court-house yonder, to be tried for this offence against the laws."

"That is true. If I be alive, my lord, and have strength sufficient, I shall be there."

"You must be there," said Mrs. Proudie. "The police will look to that, Mr. Crawley." She was becoming very angry in that the man would not answer her a word. On this occasion again he did not even look at her.

"Yes; you will be there," said the bishop. "Now that is, to say the least of it, an unseemly position for a beneficed clergyman."

"You said before, my lord, that it was an unfortunate position, and the word, methinks, was better chosen."

"It is very unseemly, very unseemly indeed," said Mrs. Proudie; "nothing could possibly be more unseemly. The bishop might very properly have used a much stronger word."

"Under these circumstances," continued the bishop, "looking to the welfare of your parish, to the welfare

of the diocese, and allow me to say, Mr. Crawley, to the welfare of yourself also——"

"And especially to the souls of the people," said Mrs. Proudie.

The bishop shook his head. It is hard to be impressively eloquent when one is interrupted at every best turned period, even by a supporting voice. "Yes;—and looking of course to the religious interests of your people, Mr. Crawley, I came to the conclusion that it would be expedient that you should cease your ministrations for a while." The bishop paused, and Mr. Crawley bowed his head. "I, therefore, sent over to you a gentleman with whom I am well acquainted, Mr. Thumble, with a letter from myself, in which I endeavoured to impress upon you, without the use of any severe language, what my convictions were."

"Severe words are often the best mercy," said Mrs. Proudie. Mr. Crawley had raised his hand, with his finger out, preparatory to answering the bishop. But as Mrs. Proudie had spoken he dropped his finger and was silent.

"Mr. Thumble brought me back your written reply," continued the bishop, "by which I was grieved to find that you were not willing to submit yourself to my counsel in the matter."

"I was most unwilling, my lord. Submission to authority is at times a duty;—and at times opposition to authority is a duty also."

"Opposition to just authority cannot be a duty, Mr. Crawley."

"Opposition to usurped authority is an imperative duty," said Mr. Crawley.

"And who is to be the judge?" demanded Mrs.

Proudie. Then there was silence for a while; when, as Mr. Crawley made no reply, the lady repeated her question. "Will you be pleased to answer my question, sir? Who, in such a case, is to be the judge?" But Mr. Crawley did not please to answer. "The man is obstinate," said Mrs. Proudie.

"I had better proceed," said the bishop. "Mr. Thumble brought me back your reply, which grieved me greatly."

"It was contumacious and indecent," said Mrs. Proudie.

The bishop again shook his head and looked so unutterably miserable that a smile came across Mr. Crawley's face. After all, others besides himself had their troubles and trials. Mrs. Proudie saw and understood the smile, and became more angry than ever. She drew her chair close to the table, and began to fidget with her fingers among the papers. She had never before encountered a clergyman so contumacious, so indecent, so unreverend,—so upsetting. She had had to do with men difficult to manage;—the archdeacon for instance; but the archdeacon had never been so impertinent to her as this man. She had quarrelled once openly with a chaplain of her husband's, a clergyman whom she herself had introduced to her husband, and who had treated her very badly;—but not so badly, not with such unscrupulous violence, as she was now encountering from this ill-clothed beggarly man, this perpetual curate, with his dirty broken boots, this already half-convicted thief! Such was her idea of Mr. Crawley's conduct to her, while she was fingering the papers,—simply because Mr. Crawley would not speak to her.

"I forget where I was," said the bishop. "Oh. Mr. Thumble came back, and I received your letter; —of course I received it. And I was surprised to learn from that, that in spite of what had occurred at Silverbridge, you were still anxious to continue the usual Sunday ministrations in your church."

"I was determined that I would do my duty at Hogglestock as long as I might be left there to do it," said Mr. Crawley.

"Duty!" said Mrs. Proudie.

"Just a moment, my dear," said the bishop. "When Sunday came, I had no alternative but to send Mr. Thumble over again to Hogglestock. It occurred to us,—to me and Mrs. Proudie——"

"I will tell Mr. Crawley just now what has occurred to me," said Mrs. Proudie.

"Yes;—just so. And I am sure that he will take it in good part. It occurred to me, Mr. Crawley, that your first letter might have been written in haste."

"It was written in haste, my lord; your messenger was waiting."

"Yes;—just so. Well; so I sent him again, hoping that he might be accepted as a messenger of peace. It was a most disagreeable mission for any gentleman, Mr. Crawley."

"Most disagreeable, my lord."

"And you refused him permission to obey the instructions which I had given him! You would not let him read from your desk, or preach from your pulpit."

"Had I been Mr. Thumble," said Mrs. Proudie, "I would have read from that desk and I would have preached from that pulpit."

Mr. Crawley waited a moment, thinking that the

bishop might perhaps speak again; but as he did not, but sat expectant, as though he had finished his discourse, and now expected a reply, Mr. Crawley got up from his seat and drew near to the table. "My lord," he began, "it has all been just as you have said. I did answer your first letter in haste."

"The more shame for you," said Mrs. Proudie.

"And therefore, for aught I know, my letter to your lordship may be so worded as to need some apology."

"Of course it needs an apology," said Mrs. Proudie.

"But for the matter of it, my lord, no apology can be made, nor is any needed. I did refuse to your messenger permission to perform the services of my church, and if you send twenty more, I shall refuse them all,—till the time may come when it will be your lordship's duty, in accordance with the laws of the church, as borne out and backed by the laws of the land, to provide during my constrained absence for the spiritual wants of those poor people at Hogglestock."

"Poor people, indeed," said Mrs. Proudie. "Poor wretches!"

"And, my lord, it may be, that it shall soon be your lordship's duty to take due and legal steps for depriving me of my benefice at Hogglestock;—nay, probably, for silencing me altogether as to the exercise of my sacred profession!"

"Of course it will, sir. Your gown will be taken from you," said Mrs. Proudie. The bishop was looking with all his eyes up at the great forehead and great eyebrows of the man, and was so fascinated by the power that was exercised over him by the other man's strength that he hardly now noticed his wife.

"It may well be so," continued Mr. Crawley. "The

circumstances are strong against me; and, though your lordship has altogether misunderstood the nature of the duty performed by the magistrates in sending my case for trial,—although, as it seems to me, you have come to conclusions in this matter in ignorance of the very theory of our laws——"

"Sir!" said Mrs. Proudie.

"Yet I can foresee the probability that a jury may discover me to have been guilty of theft."

"Of course the jury will do so," said Mrs. Proudie.

"Should such verdict be given, then, my lord, your interference will be legal, proper, and necessary. And you will find that, even if it be within my power to oppose obstacles to your lordship's authority, I will oppose no such obstacle. There is, I believe, no appeal in criminal cases."

"None at all," said Mrs. Proudie. "There is no appeal against your bishop. You should have learned that before."

"But till that time shall come, my lord, I shall hold my own at Hogglestock as you hold your own here at Barchester. Nor have you more power to turn me out of my pulpit by your mere voice, than I have to turn you out of your throne by mine. If you doubt me, my lord, your lordship's ecclesiastical court is open to you. Try it there."

"You defy us, then?" said Mrs. Proudie.

"My lord, I grant your authority as bishop to be great, but even a bishop can only act as the law allows him."

"God forbid that I should do more," said the bishop.

"Sir, you will find that your wicked threats will fall back upon your own head," said Mrs. Proudie.

"Peace, woman," Mr. Crawley said, addressing her at last. The bishop jumped out of his chair at hearing the wife of his bosom called a woman. But he jumped rather in admiration than in anger. He had already begun to perceive that Mr. Crawley was a man who had better be left to take care of the souls at Hogglestock, at any rate till the trial should come on.

"Woman!" said Mrs. Proudie, rising to her feet as though she really intended some personal encounter.

"Madam," said Mr. Crawley, "you should not interfere in these matters. You simply debase your husband's high office. The distaff were more fitting for you. My lord, good-morning." And before either of them could speak again, he was out of the room, and through the hall, and beyond the gate, and standing beneath the towers of the cathedral. Yes, he had, he thought, crushed the bishop. He had succeeded in crumpling the bishop up within the clutch of his fist.

He started in a spirit of triumph to walk back on his road towards Hogglestock. He did not think of the long distance before him for the first hour of his journey. He had had his victory, and the remembrance of that braced his nerves and gave elasticity to his sinews, and he went stalking along the road with rapid strides, muttering to himself from time to time as he went along some word about Mrs. Proudie and her distaff. Mr. Thumble would not, he thought, come to him again,—not, at any rate, till the assizes were drawing near. And he had resolved what he would do then. When the day of his trial was near, he would himself write to the bishop, and beg that provision might be made for his church, in the event of the verdict going against him. His friend, Dean Arabin, was

to be home before that time, and the idea had occurred to him of asking the dean to see to this. But the other would be the more independent course, and the better. And there was a matter as to which he was not altogether well pleased with the dean, although he was so conscious of his own peculiarities as to know that he could hardly trust himself for a judgment. But, at any rate, he would apply to the bishop,—to the bishop whom he had just left prostrate in his palace,—when the time of his trial should be close at hand.

Full of such thoughts as these he went along almost gaily, nor felt the fatigue of the road till he had covered the first five miles out of Barchester. It was nearly four o'clock, and the thick gloom of the winter evening was making itself felt. And then he began to be fatigued. He had not as yet eaten since he had left his home in the morning, and he now pulled a crust out of his pocket and leaned against a gate as he crunched it. There were still ten miles before him, and he knew that such an addition to the work he had already done would task him very severely. Farmer Mangle had told him that he would not leave Framley Mill till five, and he had got time to reach Framley Mill by that time. But he had said that he would not return to Framley Mill, and he remembered his suspicion that his wife and farmer Mangle between them had cozened him. No; he would persevere and walk,—walk, though he should drop upon the road. He was now nearer fifty than forty years of age, and hardships as well as time had told upon him. He knew that though his strength was good for the commencement of a hard day's work, it would not hold out for him as it used to do. He knew that the last four miles

in the dark night would be very sad with him. But still he persevered, endeavouring, as he went, to cherish himself with the remembrance of his triumph.

He passed the turning going down to Framley with courage, but when he came to the further turning, by which the cart would return from Framley to the Hogglestock road, he looked wistfully down the road for farmer Mangle. But farmer Mangle was still at the mill, waiting in expectation that Mr. Crawley might come to him. But the poor traveller paused here barely for a minute, and then went on, stumbling through the mud, striking his ill-covered feet against the rough stones in the dark, sweating in his weakness, almost tottering at times, and calculating whether his remaining strength would serve to carry him home. He had almost forgotten the bishop and his wife before at last he grasped the wicket gate leading to his own door.

"Oh, mamma, here is papa!"

"But where is the cart? I did not hear the wheels," said Mrs. Crawley.

"Oh, mamma, I think papa is ill." Then the wife took her drooping husband by both arms and strove to look him in the face. "He has walked all the way, and he is ill," said Jane.

"No, my dear, I am very tired, but not ill. Let me sit down, and give me some bread and tea, and I shall recover myself." Then Mrs. Crawley, from some secret hoard, got him a small modicum of spirits, and gave him meat and tea, and he was docile; and, obeying her behests, allowed himself to be taken to his bed.

"I do not think the bishop will send for me again," he said, as she tucked the clothes around him.

CHAPTER XIX.

"WHERE DID IT COME FROM?"

When Christmas morning came no emissary from the bishop appeared at Hogglestock to interfere with the ordinary performance of the day's services. "I think we need fear no further disturbance," Mr. Crawley said to his wife,—and there was no further disturbance.

On the day after his walk from Framley to Barchester, and from Barchester back to Hogglestock, Mr. Crawley had risen not much the worse for his labour, and had gradually given to his wife a full account of what had taken place. "A poor weak man," he said, speaking of the bishop. "A poor weak creature, and much to be pitied."

"I have always heard that she is a violent woman."

"Very violent, and very ignorant; and most intrusive withal."

"And you did not answer her a word?"

"At last my forbearance with her broke down, and I bade her mind her distaff."

"What;—really? Did you say those words to her?"

"Nay; as for my exact words I cannot remember them. I was thinking more of the words which it might be fitting that I should answer the bishop. But I certainly told her that she had better mind her distaff."

"And how did she behave then?"

"I did not wait to see. The bishop had spoken, and I had replied; and why should I tarry to behold the woman's violence? I had told him that he was wrong in law, and that I at least would not submit to usurped authority. There was nothing to keep me longer, and so I went without much ceremony of leave-taking. There had been little ceremony of greeting on their part, and there was less in the making of adieux on mine. They had told me that I was a thief——"

"No, Josiah,—surely not so? They did not use that very word?"

"I say they did;—they did use the very word. But stop. I am wrong. I wrong his lordship, and I crave pardon for having done so. If my memory serve me, no expression so harsh escaped from the bishop's mouth. He gave me, indeed, to understand more than once that the action taken by the magistrates was tantamount to a conviction, and that I must be guilty because they had decided that there was evidence sufficient to justify a trial. But all that arose from my lord's ignorance of the administration of the laws of his country. He was very ignorant,—puzzle-pated, as you may call it,—led by the nose by his wife, weak as water, timid, and vacillating. But he did not wish, I think, to be insolent. It was Mrs. Proudie who told me to my face that I was a—thief."

"May she be punished for the cruel word!" said Mrs. Crawley. "May the remembrance that she has spoken it come, some day, heavily upon her heart!"

"'Vengeance is mine. I will repay, saith the Lord,'" answered Mr. Crawley. "We may safely leave all that alone, and rid our minds of such wishes, if it be

possible. It is well, I think, that violent offences, when committed, should be met by instant rebuke. To turn the other cheek instantly to the smiter can hardly be suitable in these days, when the hands of so many are raised to strike. But the return blow should be given only while the smart remains. She hurt me then; but what is it to me now, that she called me a thief to my face? Do I not know that, all the country round, men and women are calling me the same behind my back?"

"No, Josiah, you do not know that. They say that the thing is very strange,—so strange that it requires a trial; but no one thinks you have taken that which was not your own."

"I think I did. I myself think I took that which was not my own. My poor head suffers so;—so many grievous thoughts distract me, that I am like a child, and know not what I do." As he spoke thus he put both hands up to his head, leaning forward as though in anxious thought,—as though he were striving to bring his mind to bear with accuracy upon past events. "It could not have been mine, and yet——" Then he sat silent, and made no effort to continue his speech.

"And yet?"— said his wife, encouraging him to proceed. If she could only learn the real truth, she thought that she might perhaps yet save him, with assistance from their friends.

"When I said that I had gotten it from that man I must have been mad."

"From which man, love?"

"From the man Soames,—he who accuses me. And yet, as the Lord hears me, I thought so then. The truth is, that there are times when I am not—sane. I am not a thief,—not before God; but I am—mad at

times." These last words he spoke very slowly, in a whisper,—without any excitement,—indeed with a composure which was horrible to witness. And what he said was the more terrible because she was so well convinced of the truth of his words. Of course he was no thief. She wanted no one to tell her that. As he himself had expressed it, he was no thief before God, however the money might have come into his possession. That there were times when his reason, once so fine and clear, could not act, could not be trusted to guide him right, she had gradually come to know with fear and trembling. But he himself had never before hinted his own consciousness of this calamity. Indeed, he had been so unwilling to speak of himself and of his own state, that she had been unable even to ask him a question about the money,—lest he should suspect that she suspected him. Now he was speaking,—but speaking with such heart-rending sadness that she could hardly urge him to go on.

"You have sometimes been ill, Josiah, as any of us may be," she said, "and that has been the cause."

"There are different kinds of sickness. There is sickness of the body, and sickness of the heart, and sickness of the spirit;—and then there is sickness of the mind, the worst of all."

"With you, Josiah, it has chiefly been the first."

"With me, Mary, it has been all of them,—every one! My spirit is broken, and my mind has not been able to keep its even tenour amidst the ruins. But I will strive. I will strive. I will strive still. And if God helps me, I will prevail." Then he took up his hat and cloak, and went forth among the lanes; and on this occasion his wife was glad that he should go alone.

This occurred a day or two before Christmas, and Mrs. Crawley during those days said nothing more to her husband on the subject which he had so unexpectedly discussed. She asked him no questions about the money, or as to the possibility of his exercising his memory, nor did she counsel him to plead that the false excuses given by him for his possession of the cheque had been occasioned by the sad slip to which sorrow had in those days subjected his memory and his intellect. But the matter had always been on her mind. Might it not be her paramount duty to do something of this at the present moment? Might it not be that his acquittal or conviction would depend on what she might now learn from him? It was clear to her that he was brighter in spirit since his encounter with the Proudies than he had ever been since the accusation had been first made against him. And she knew well that his present mood would not be of long continuance. He would fall again into his moody silent ways, and then the chance of learning aught from him would be past, and, perhaps, for ever.

He performed the Christmas services with nothing of special despondency in his tone or manner, and his wife thought that she had never heard him give the sacrament with more impressive dignity. After the service he stood awhile at the churchyard gate, and exchanged a word of courtesy as to the season with such of the families of the farmers as had stayed for the Lord's Supper.

"I waited at Framley for your reverence till arter six,—so I did," said farmer Mangle.

"I kept the road, and walked the whole way," said Mr. Crawley. "I think I told you that I should not

return to the mill. But I am not the less obliged by your great kindness."

"Say nowt o' that," said the farmer. "No doubt I had business at the mill,—lots to do at the mill." Nor did he think that the fib he was telling was at all incompatible with the Holy Sacrament in which he had just taken a part.

The Christmas dinner at the parsonage was not a repast that did much honour to the season, but it was a better dinner than the inhabitants of that house usually saw on the board before them. There was roast-pork, and mince-pies, and a bottle of wine. As Mrs. Crawley with her own hand put the meat upon the table, and then, as was her custom in their house, proceeded to cut it up, she looked at her husband's face to see whether he was scrutinising the food with painful eye. It was better that she should tell the truth at once than that she should be made to tell it, in answer to a question. Everything on the table, except the bread and potatoes, had come in a basket from Framley Court. Pork had been sent instead of beef, because people in the country, when they kill their pigs, do sometimes give each other pork,—but do not exchange joints of beef, when they slay their oxen. All this was understood by Mrs. Crawley, but she almost wished that beef had been sent, because beef would have attracted less attention. He said, however, nothing as to the meat; but when his wife proposed to him that he should eat a mince-pie he resented it. "The bare food," said he, "is bitter enough, coming as it does; but that would choke me." She did not press it, but eat one herself, as otherwise her girl would have been forced also to refuse the dainty.

That evening, as soon as Jane was in bed, she resolved to ask him some further questions. "You will have a lawyer, Josiah,—will you not?" she said.

"Why should I have a lawyer?"

"Because he will know what questions to ask, and how questions on the other side should be answered."

"I have no questions to ask, and there is only one way in which questions should be answered. I have no money to pay a lawyer."

"But, Josiah, in such a case as this, where your honour and our very life depend upon it——"

"Depend on what?"

"On your acquittal."

"I shall not be acquitted. It is as well to look it in the face at once. Lawyer or no lawyer, they will say that I took the money. Were I upon the jury, trying the case myself, knowing all that I know now," —and as he said this he struck forth with his hand into the air,—"I think that I should say so myself. A lawyer will do no good. It is here. It is here." And again he put his hands up to his head.

So far she had been successful. At this moment it had in truth been her object to induce him to speak of his own memory, and not of the aid that a lawyer might give. The proposition of the lawyer had been brought in to introduce the subject.

"But, Josiah——"

"Well?"

It was very hard for her to speak. She could not bear to torment him by any allusion to his own deficiencies. She could not endure to make him think that she suspected him of any frailty either in intellect or thought. Wifelike, she desired to worship him, and

that he should know that she worshipped him. But if a word might save him! "Josiah, where did it come from?"

"Yes," said he; "yes; that is the question. Where did it come from?"—and he turned sharp upon her, looking at her with all the power of his eyes. "It is because I cannot tell you where it came from that I ought to be,—either in Bedlam as a madman, or in the county gaol as a thief." The words were so dreadful to her that she could not utter at the moment another syllable. "How is a man,—to think himself—fit—for a man's work, when he cannot answer his wife such a plain question as that?" Then he paused again. "They should take me to Bedlam at once,—at once, —at once. That would not disgrace the children as the gaol will do."

Mrs. Crawley could ask no further questions on that evening.

CHAPTER XX.

WHAT MR. WALKER THOUGHT ABOUT IT.

It had been suggested to Mr. Robarts, the parson of Framley, that he should endeavour to induce his old acquaintance, Mr. Crawely, to employ a lawyer to defend him at his trial, and Mr. Robarts had not forgotten the commission which he had undertaken. But there were difficulties in the matter of which he was well aware. In the first place Mr. Crawley was a man whom it had not at any time been easy to advise on matters private to himself; and, in the next place, this was a matter on which it was very hard to speak to the man implicated, let him be who he would. Mr. Robarts had come round to the generally accepted idea that Mr. Crawley had obtained possession of the cheque illegally,—acquitting his friend in his own mind of theft, simply by supposing that he was wool-gathering when the cheque came in his way. But in speaking to Mr. Crawley, it would be necessary,—so he thought,—to pretend a conviction that Mr. Crawley was as innocent in fact as in intention.

He had almost made up his mind to dash at the subject when he met Mr. Crawley walking through Framley to Barchester, but he had abstained, chiefly because Mr. Crawley had been too quick for him, and had got away. After that he resolved that it would be almost useless for him to go to work unless he should

be provided with a lawyer ready and willing to undertake the task; and as he was not so provided at present, he made up his mind that he would go into Silverbridge and see Mr. Walker, the attorney there. Mr. Walker always advised everybody in those parts about everything, and would be sure to know what would be the proper thing to be done in this case. So Mr. Robarts got into his gig, and drove himself into Silverbridge. He drove at once to Mr. Walker's office, and on arriving there found that the attorney was not at that moment within. But Mr. Winthrop was within. Would Mr. Robarts see Mr. Winthrop? Now, seeing Mr. Winthrop was a very different thing from seeing Mr. Walker, although the two gentlemen were partners. But still Mr. Robarts said that he would see Mr. Winthrop. Perhaps Mr. Walker might return while he was there.

"Is there anything I can do for you, Mr. Robarts?" asked Mr. Winthrop. Mr. Robarts said that he had wished to see Mr. Walker about that poor fellow Crawley. "Ah, yes; very sad case! So much sadder being a clergyman, Mr. Robarts. We are really quite sorry for him;—we are indeed. We would n't have touched the case ourselves if we could have helped ourselves. We would n't indeed. But we are obliged to take all that business here. At any rate he 'll get nothing but fair usage from us."

"I am sure of that. You don't know whether he has employed any lawyer as yet to defend him?"

"I can't say. We don't know, you know. I should say he had,— probably some Barchester attorney. Borleys and Bonstock in Barchester are very good people,—very good people indeed;—for that sort of

business I mean, Mr. Robarts. I don't suppose they have much county property in their hands."

Mr. Robarts knew that Mr. Winthrop was a fool and that he could get no useful advice from him. So he suggested that he would take his gig down to the inn, and call again before long. "You 'll find that Walker knows no more than I do about it," said Mr. Winthrop, "but of course he 'll be glad to see you if he happens to come in." So Mr. Robarts went to the inn, put up his horse, and then, as he sauntered back up the street, met Mr. Walker coming out of the private door of his house.

"I 've been at home all the morning," he said, "but I 've had a stiff job of work on hand, and told them to say in the office that I was not in. Seen Winthrop, have you? I don't suppose he did know that I was here. The clerks often know more than the partners. About Mr. Crawley is it? Come into my dining-room, Mr. Robarts, where we shall be alone. Yes;—it is a bad case; a very bad case. The pity is that anybody should ever have said anything about it. Lord bless me, if I 'd been Soames I 'd have let him have the twenty pounds. Lord Lufton would never have allowed Soames to lose it."

"But Soames wanted to find out the truth."

"Yes;—that was just it. Soames could n't bear to think that he should be left in the dark, and then, when the poor man said that Soames had paid the cheque to him in the way of business,—it was not odd that Soames's back should have been up, was it? But, Mr. Robarts, I should have thought a deal about it before I should have brought such a man as Mr. Crawley before a bench of magistrates on that charge."

"But between you and me, Mr. Walker, did he steal the money?"

"Well, Mr. Robarts, you know how I 'm placed."

"Mr. Crawley is my friend, and of course I want to assist him. I was under a great obligation to Mr. Crawley once, and I wish to befriend him, whether he took the money or not. But I could act so much better if I felt sure one way or the other."

"If you ask me, I think he did take it."

"What!—stole it?"

"I think he knew it was not his own when he took it. You see I don't think he meant to use it when he took it. He perhaps had some queer idea that Soames had been hard on him, or his lordship, and that the money was fairly his due. Then he kept the cheque by him till he was absolutely badgered out of his life by the butcher up the street there. That was about the long and the short of it, Mr. Robarts."

"I suppose so. And now what had he better do?"

"Well; if you ask me—— He is in very bad health, is n't he?"

"No; I should say not. He walked to Barchester and back the other day."

"Did he? But he 's very queer, is n't he?"

"Very odd-mannered indeed."

"And does and says all manner of odd things?"

"I think you 'd find the bishop would say so after that interview."

"Well; if it would do any good, you might have the bishop examined."

"Examined for what, Mr. Walker?"

"If you could show, you know, that Crawley has got a bee in his bonnet; that the mens sana is not

there, in short;—I think you might manage to have the trial postponed."

"But then somebody must take charge of his living."

"You parsons could manage that among you;—you and the dean and the archdeacon. The archdeacon has always got half-a-dozen curates about somewhere. And then,—after the assizes, Mr. Crawley might come to his senses; and I think,—mind, it 's only an idea,—but I think the committal might be quashed. It would have been temporary insanity, and,—though mind, I don't give my word for it,—I think he might go on and keep his living. I think so, Mr. Robarts."

"That has never occurred to me."

"No;—I dare say not. You see the difficulty is this. He 's so stiff-necked,—will do nothing himself. Well, that will do for one proof of temporary insanity. The real truth is, Mr. Robarts, he is as mad as a hatter."

"Upon my word I 've often thought so."

"And you would n't mind saying so in evidence,—would you? Well, you see, there is no helping such a man in any other way. He won't even employ a lawyer to defend him."

"That was what I had come to you about."

"I 'm told he won't. Now a man must be mad who won't employ a lawyer when he wants one. You see, the point we should gain would be this,—if we tried to get him through as being a little touched in the upper story,—whatever we could do for him, we could do against his own will. The more he opposed us the stronger our case would be. He would swear he was not mad at all, and we should say that that was the greatest sign of his madness. But when I say we, of course I mean you. I must not appear in it."

"I wish you could, Mr. Walker."

"Of course I can't; but that won't make any difference."

"I suppose he must have a lawyer?"

"Yes, he must have a lawyer;—or rather his friends must."

"And who should employ him, ostensibly?"

"Ah;—there 's the difficulty. His wife would n't do it, I suppose? She could n't do him a better turn."

"He would never forgive her. And she would never consent to act against him."

"Could you interfere?"

"If necessary, I will;—but I hardly know him well enough."

"Has he no father or mother, or uncles or aunts? He must have somebody belonging to him," said Mr. Walker.

Then it occurred to Mr. Robarts that Dean Arabin would be the proper person to interfere. Dean Arabin and Mr. Crawley had been intimate friends in early life, and Dean Arabin knew more of him than did any man, at least in those parts. All this Mr. Robarts explained to Mr. Walker, and Mr. Walker agreed with him that the services of Dean Arabin should if possible be obtained. Mr. Robarts would at once write to Dean Arabin and explain at length all the circumstances of the case. "The worst of it is, he will hardly be home in time," said Mr. Walker. "Perhaps he would come a little sooner if you were to press it?"

"But we could act in his name in his absence, I suppose?—of course with his authority?"

"I wish he could be here a month before the assizes, Mr. Robarts. It would be better."

"And in the mean time shall I say anything to Mr. Crawley, myself, about employing a lawyer?"

"I think I would. If he turns upon you, as like enough he may, and abuses you, that will help us in one way. If he should consent, and perhaps he may, that would help us in the other way. I 'm told he 's been over and upset the whole coach at the palace."

"I should n't think the bishop got much out of him," said the parson.

"I don't like Crawley the less for speaking his mind free to the bishop," said the attorney, laughing. "And he 'll speak it free to you too, Mr. Robarts."

"He won't break any of my bones. Tell me, Mr. Walker, what lawyer shall I name to him?"

"You can't have a better man than Mr. Mason, up the street there."

"Winthrop proposed Borleys at Barchester."

"No, no, no. Borleys and Bonstock are capital people to push a fellow through on a charge of horse-stealing, or to squeeze a man for a little money; but they are not the people for Mr. Crawley in such a case as this. Mason is a better man; and then Mason and I know each other." In saying which Mr. Walker winked.

There was then a discussion between them whether Mr. Robarts should go at once to Mr. Mason; but it was decided at last that he should see Mr. Crawley and also write to the dean before he did so. The dean might wish to employ his own lawyer, and if so the double expense should be avoided. "Always remember, Mr. Robarts, that when you go into an attorney's office door, you will have to pay for it, first or last. In here, you see, the dingy old mahogany, bare as it is, makes

you safe. Or else it 's the salt-cellar, which will not allow itself to be polluted by six-and-eightpenny considerations. But there is the other kind of tax to be paid. You must go up and see Mrs. Walker, or you won't have her help in this matter."

Mr. Walker returned to his work, either to some private den within his house, or to his office, and Mr. Robarts was taken upstairs to the drawing-room. There he found Mrs. Walker and her daughter, and Miss Anne Prettyman, who had just looked in, full of the story of Mr. Crawley's walk to Barchester. Mr. Thumble had seen one of Dr. Tempest's curates, and had told the whole story,—he, Mr. Thumble, having heard Mrs. Proudie's version of what had occurred, and having, of course, drawn his own deductions from her premises. And it seemed that Mr. Crawley had been watched as he passed through the close out of Barchester. A minor canon had seen him, and had declared that he was going at the rate of a hunt, swinging his arms on high and speaking very loud, though,—as the minor canon said with regret,—the words were hardly audible. But there had been no doubt as to the man. Mr. Crawley's old hat, and short rusty cloak, and dirty boots, had been duly observed and chronicled by the minor canon; and Mr. Thumble had been enabled to put together a not altogether false picture of what had occurred. As soon as the greetings between Mr. Robarts and the ladies had been made, Miss Anne Prettyman broke out again, just where she had left off when Mr. Robarts came in. "They say that Mrs. Proudie declared that she will have him sent to Botany Bay!"

"Luckily Mrs. Proudie won't have much to do in

the matter," said Miss Walker, who ranged herself, as to church matters, in ranks altogether opposed to those commanded by Mrs. Proudie.

"She will have nothing to do with it, my dear," said Mrs. Walker; "and I dare say Mrs. Proudie was not foolish enough to say anything of the kind."

"Mamma, she would be fool enough to say anything. Would she not, Mr. Robarts?"

"You forget, Miss Walker, that Mrs. Proudie is in authority over me."

"So she is, for the matter of that," said the young lady; "but I know very well what you all think of her, and say of her too, at Framley. Your friend, Lady Lufton, loves her dearly. I wish I could have been hidden behind a curtain in the palace, to hear what Mr. Crawley said to her."

"Mr. Smillie declares," said Miss Anne Prettyman, "that the bishop has been ill ever since. Mr. Smillie went over to his mother's at Barchester for Christmas, and took part of the cathedral duty, and we had Mr. Spooner over here in his place. So Mr. Smillie of course heard all about it. Only fancy poor Mr. Crawley walking all the way from Hogglestock to Barchester and back;—and I am told he hardly had a shoe to his foot! Is it not a shame, Mr. Robarts?"

"I don't think it was quite so bad as you say, Miss Prettyman; but, upon the whole, I do think it is a shame. But what can we do?"

"I suppose there are tithes at Hogglestock. Why are they not given up to the church, as they ought to be?"

"My dear Miss Prettyman, that is a very large subject, and I am afraid it cannot be settled in time to re-

lieve our poor friend from his distress." Then Mr. Robarts escaped from the ladies in Mr. Walker's house, who, as it seemed to him, were touching upon dangerous ground, and went back to the yard of the George Inn for his gig,—the George and Vulture, it was properly called, and was the house in which the magistrates had sat when they committed Mr. Crawley for trial.

"Footed it every inch of the way, blowed if he did n't," the ostler was saying to a gentleman's groom, whom Mr. Robarts recognised to be the servant of his friend, Major Grantly; and Mr. Robarts knew that they also were talking about Mr. Crawley. Everybody in the county was talking about Mr. Crawley. At home, at Framley, there was no other subject of discourse. Lady Lufton, the dowager, was full of it, being firmly convinced that Mr. Crawley was innocent, because the bishop was supposed to regard him as guilty. There had been a family conclave held at Framley Court over that basket of provisions which had been sent for the Christmas cheer of the Hogglestock parsonage, each of the three ladies, the two Lady Luftons and Mrs. Robarts, having special views of their own. How the pork had been substituted for the beef by old Lady Lufton, young Lady Lufton thinking that after all the beef would be less dangerous, and how a small turkey had been rashly suggested by Mrs. Robarts, and how certain small articles had been inserted in the bottom of the basket which Mrs. Crawley had never shown to her husband, need not here be told at length. But Mr. Robarts, as he heard the two grooms talking about Mr. Crawley, began to feel that Mr. Crawley had achieved at least celebrity.

The groom touched his hat as Mr. Robarts walked up. "Has the major returned home yet?" Mr. Robarts asked. The groom said that his master was still at Plumstead, and that he was to go over to Plumstead to fetch the major and Miss Edith in a day or two. Then Mr. Robarts got into his gig, and as he drove out of the yard he heard the words of the men as they returned to the same subject. "Footed it all the way," said one. "And yet he 's a gen'leman, too," said the other. Mr. Robarts thought of this as he drove on, intending to call at Hogglestock on that very day on his way home. It was undoubtedly the fact that Mr. Crawley was recognised to be a gentleman by all who knew him, high or low, rich or poor, by those who thought well of him and by those who thought ill. These grooms who had been telling each other that this parson, who was to be tried as a thief, had been constrained to walk from Hogglestock to Barchester and back, because he could not afford to travel in any other way, and that his boots were cracked and his clothes ragged, had still known him to be a gentleman! Nobody doubted it; not even they who thought he had stolen the money. Mr. Robarts himself was certain of it, and told himself that he knew it by evidences which his own education made clear to him. But how was it that the grooms knew it? For my part I think that there are no better judges of the article than the grooms.

Thinking still of all which he had heard, Mr. Robarts found himself at Mr. Crawley's gate at Hogglestock.

CHAPTER XXI.

MR. ROBARTS ON HIS EMBASSY.

Mr. Robarts was not altogether easy in his mind as he approached Mr. Crawley's house. He was aware that the task before him was a very difficult one, and he had not confidence in himself,—that he was exactly the man fitted for the performance of such a task. He was a little afraid of Mr. Crawley, acknowledging tacitly to himself that the man had a power of ascendancy with which he would hardly be able to cope successfully. In old days he had once been rebuked by Mr. Crawley, and had been cowed by the rebuke; and though there was no touch of rancour in his heart on this account, no slightest remaining venom,—but rather increased respect and friendship,—still he was unable to overcome the remembrance of the scene in which the perpetual curate of Hogglestock had undoubtedly had the mastery of him. So, when two dogs have fought and one has conquered, the conquered dog will always show an unconscious submission to the conqueror.

He hailed a boy on the road as he drew near to the house, knowing that he would find no one at the parsonage to hold his horse for him, and was thus able without delay to walk through the garden and knock at the door. "Papa was not at home," Jane said.

"Papa was at the school. But papa could certainly be summoned. She herself would run across to the school if Mr. Robarts would come in." So Mr. Robarts entered, and found Mrs. Crawley in the sitting-room. Mr. Crawley would be in directly, she said. And then, hurrying on to the subject with confused haste, in order that a word or two might be spoken before her husband came back, she expressed her thanks and his for the good things which had been sent to them at Christmastide.

"It 's old Lady Lufton's doings," said Mr. Robarts, trying to laugh the matter over.

"I knew that it came from Framley, Mr. Robarts, and I know how good you all are there. I have not written to thank Lady Lufton. I thought it better not to write. You sister will understand why, if no one else does. But you will tell them from me, I am sure, that it was, as they intended, a comfort to us. Your sister knows too much of us for me to suppose that our great poverty can be secret from her. And, as far as I am concerned, I do not now much care who knows it."

"There is no disgrace in not being rich," said Mr. Robarts.

"No; and the feeling of disgrace which does attach itself to being so poor as we are is deadened by the actual suffering which such poverty brings with it. At least it has become so with me. I am not ashamed to say that I am very grateful for what you all have done for us at Framley. But you must not say anything to him about that."

"Of course I will not, Mrs. Crawley."

"His spirit is higher than mine, I think, and he suffers more from the natural disinclination which we all

have to receiving alms. Are you going to speak to him about this affair of the—cheque, Mr. Robarts?"

"I am going to ask him to put his case into some lawyer's hands."

"Oh! I wish he would!"

"And will he not?"

"It is very kind of you, your coming to ask him, but——"

"Has he so strong an objection?"

"He will tell you that he has no money to pay a lawyer."

"But, surely, if he were convinced that it was absolutely necessary for the vindication of his innocence, he would submit to charge himself with an expense so necessary, not only for himself, but for his family?"

"He will say it ought not to be necessary. You know, Mr. Robarts, that in some respects he is not like other men. You will not let what I say of him set you against him?"

"Indeed, no."

"It is most kind of you to make the attempt. He will be here directly, and when he comes I will leave you together."

While she was yet speaking his step was heard along the gravel-path, and he hurried into the room with quick steps. "I crave your pardon, Mr. Robarts," he said, "that I should keep you waiting." Now Mr. Robarts had not been there ten minutes, and any such asking of pardon was hardly necessary. And, even in his own house, Mr. Crawley affected a mock humility, as though, either through his own debasement, or because of the superior station of the other clergyman, he were not entitled to put himself on an equal footing

with his visitor. He would not have shaken hands with Mr. Robarts,—intending to indicate that he did not presume to do so while the present accusation was hanging over him,—had not the action been forced upon him. And then there was something of a protest in his manner, as though remonstrating against a thing that was unbecoming to him. Mr. Robarts, without analysing it, understood it all, and knew that behind the humility there was a crushing pride,—a pride which, in all probability, would rise up and crush him before he could get himself out of the room again. It was, perhaps, after all, a question whether the man was not served rightly by the extremities to which he was reduced. There was something radically wrong within him, which had put him into antagonism with all the world, and which produced these never-dying grievances. There were many clergymen in the country with incomes as small as that which had fallen to the lot of Mr. Crawley, but they managed to get on without displaying their sores as Mr. Crawley displayed his. They did not wear their old rusty cloaks with all that ostentatious bitterness of poverty which seemed to belong to that garment when displayed on Mr. Crawley's shoulders. Such, for a moment, were Mr. Robarts's thoughts, and he almost repented himself of his present mission. But then he thought of Mrs. Crawley, and remembering that her sufferings were at any rate undeserved, determined that he would persevere.

Mrs. Crawley disappeared almost as soon as her husband appeared, and Mr. Robarts found himself standing in front of his friend, who remained fixed on the spot, with his hands folded over each other and his neck slightly bent forward, in token also of humility.

"I regret," he said, "that your horse should be left there, exposed to the inclemency of the weather; but——"

"The horse won't mind it a bit," said Mr. Robarts. "A parson's horse is like a butcher's, and knows that he must n't be particular about waiting in the cold."

"I never have had one myself," said Mr. Crawley. Now Mr. Robarts had had more horses than one before now, and had been thought by some to have incurred greater expense than was befitting in his stable comforts. The subject, therefore, was a sore one, and he was worried a little. "I just wanted to say a few words to you, Crawley," he said, "and if I am not occupying too much of your time——"

"My time is altogether at your disposal. Will you be seated?"

Then Mr. Robarts sat down, and, swinging his hat between his legs, bethought himself how he should begin his work. "We had the archdeacon over at Framley the other day," he said. "Of course you know the archdeacon?"

"I never had the advantage of any acquaintance with Dr. Grantly. Of course I know him well by name and also personally,—that is, by sight."

"And by character?"

"Nay; I can hardly say so much as that. But I am aware that his name stands high with many of his order."

"Exactly; that is what I mean. You know that his judgment is thought more of in clerical matters than that of any other clergyman in the county."

"By a certain party, Mr. Robarts."

"Well, yes. They don't think much of him, I suppose, at the palace. But that won't lower him in your estimation."

"I by no means wish to derogate from Dr. Grantly's high position in his own archdeaconry,—to which, as you are aware, I am not attached,—nor to criticise his conduct in any respect. It would be unbecoming in me to do so. But I cannot accept it as a point in a clergyman's favour, that he should be opposed to his bishop."

Now this was too much for Mr. Robarts. After all that he had heard of the visit paid by Mr. Crawley to the palace,—of the venom displayed by Mrs. Proudie on that occasion, and of the absolute want of subordination to episcopal authority which Mr. Crawley himself was supposed to have shown,—Mr. Robarts did feel it hard that his friend the archdeacon should be snubbed in this way because he was deficient in reverence for his bishop! "I thought, Crawley," he said, "that you yourself were inclined to dispute orders coming to you from the palace. The world at least says as much concerning you."

"What the world says of me I have learned to disregard very much, Mr. Robarts. But I hope that I shall never disobey the authority of the church when properly and legally exercised."

"I hope with all my heart you never will; nor I either. And the archdeacon, who knows, to the breadth of a hair, what a bishop ought to do and what he ought not, and what he may do and what he may not, will, I should say, be the last man in England to sin in that way."

"Very probably. I am far from contradicting you there. Pray understand, Mr. Robarts, that I bring no accusation against the archdeacon. Why should I?"

"I did n't mean to discuss him at all."

"Nor did I, Mr. Robarts."

"I only mentioned his name, because, as I said, he was over with us the other day at Framley, and we were all talking about your affair."

"My affair!" said Mr. Crawley. And then came a frown upon his brow, and a gleam of fire into his eyes, which effectually banished that look of extreme humility which he had assumed. "And may I ask why the archdeacon was discussing—my affair?"

"Simply from the kindness which he bears to you."

"I am grateful for the archdeacon's kindness, as a man is bound to be for any kindness, whether displayed wisely or unwisely. But it seems to me that my affair, as you call it, Mr. Robarts, is of that nature that they who wish well to me will better further their wishes by silence than by any discussion."

"Then I cannot agree with you." Mr. Crawley shrugged his shoulders, opened his hands a little and then closed them, and bowed his head. He could not have declared more clearly by any words that he differed altogether from Mr. Robarts, and that as the subject was one so peculiarly his own he had a right to expect that his opinion should be allowed to prevail against that of any other person. "If you come to that, you know, how is anybody's tongue to be stopped?"

"That vain tongues cannot be stopped, I am well aware. I do not expect that people's tongues should be stopped. I am not saying what men will do, but what good wishes should dictate."

"Well, perhaps you 'll hear me out for a minute." Mr. Crawley again bowed his head. "Whether we were wise or unwise, we were discussing this affair."

"Whether I stole Mr. Soames's money?"

"No; nobody supposed for a moment you had stolen it."

"I cannot understand how they should suppose anything else, knowing, as they do, that the magistrates have committed me for the theft. This took place at Framley, you say, and probably in Lord Lufton's presence."

"Exactly."

"And Lord Lufton was chairman at the sitting of the magistrates at which I was committed. How can it be that he should think otherwise?"

"I am sure he has not an idea that you were guilty. Nor yet has Dr. Thorne, who was also one of the magistrates. I don't suppose one of them then thought so."

"Then their action, to say the least of it, was very strange."

"It was all because you had nobody to manage it for you. I thoroughly believe that if you had placed the matter in the hands of a good lawyer, you would never have heard a word more about it. That seems to be the opinion of every body I speak to on the subject."

"Then in this country a man is to be punished or not, according to his ability to fee a lawyer!"

"I am not talking about punishment."

"And presuming an innocent man to have the ability and not the will to do so, he is to be punished, to be ruined root and branch, self and family, charac-

ter and pocket, simply because, knowing his own innocence, he does not choose to depend on the mercenary skill of a man whose trade he abhors for the establishment of that which should be clear as the sun at noon-day! You say I am innocent, and yet you tell me I am to be condemned as a guilty man, have my gown taken from me, be torn from my wife and children, be disgraced before the eyes of all men, and be made a byword and a thing horrible to be mentioned, because I will not fee an attorney to fee another man to come and lie on my behalf, to browbeat witnesses, to make false appeals, and perhaps shed false tears in defending me. You have come to me asking me to do this, if I understand you, telling me that the archdeacon would so advise me?"

"That is my object." Mr. Crawley, as he had spoken, had in his vehemence risen from his seat, and Mr. Robarts was also standing.

"Then tell the archdeacon," said Mr. Crawley, "that I will have none of his advice. I will have no one there paid by me to obstruct the course of justice or to hoodwink a jury. I have been in courts of law, and know what is the work for which these gentlemen are hired. I will have none of it, and I will thank you to tell the archdeacon so, with my respectful acknowledgments of his consideration and condescension. I say nothing as to my own innocence, or my own guilt. But I do say that if I am dragged before that tribunal, an innocent man, and am falsely declared to be guilty, because I lack money to bribe a lawyer to speak for me, then the laws of this country deserve but little of that reverence which we are accustomed to pay to them. And if I be guilty——"

"Nobody supposes you to be guilty."

"And if I be guilty," continued Mr. Crawley, altogether ignoring the interruption, except by the repetition of his words, and a slight raising of his voice, "I will not add to my guilt by hiring any one to prove a falsehood or to disprove a truth."

"I 'm sorry that you should say so, Mr. Crawley."

"I speak according to what light I have, Mr. Robarts; and if I have been over-warm with you,—and I am conscious that I have been in fault in that direction,—I must pray you to remember that I am somewhat hardly tried. My sorrows and troubles are so great that they rise against me and disturb me, and drive me on,—whither I would not be driven."

"But, my friend, is not that just the reason why you should trust in this matter to some one who can be more calm than yourself?"

"I cannot trust to any one,—in a matter of conscience. To do as you would have me is to me wrong. Shall I do wrong because I am unhappy?"

"You should cease to think it wrong when so advised by persons you can trust."

"I can trust no one with my own conscience;—not even the archdeacon, great as he is."

"The archdeacon has meant only well to you."

"I will presume so. I will believe so. I do think so. Tell the archdeacon from me that I humbly thank him;—that, in a matter of church question, I might probably submit my judgment to his, even though he might have no authority over me, knowing as I do that in such matters his experience has been great. Tell him also, that though I would fain that this unfortunate affair might burden the tongue of none among

my neighbours,—at least till I shall have stood before the judge to receive the verdict of the jury, and, if needful, his lordship's sentence,—still I am convinced that in what he has spoken, as also in what he has done, he has not yielded to the idleness of gossip, but has exercised his judgment with intended kindness."

"He has certainly intended to do you a service; and as for its not being talked about, that is out of the question."

"And for yourself, Mr. Robarts, whom I have ever regarded as a friend since circumstances brought me into your neighbourhood,—for you, whose sister I love tenderly in memory of past kindness, though now she is removed so far above my sphere as to make it unfit that I should call her my friend——"

"She does not think so at all."

"For yourself, as I was saying, pray believe me that though from the roughness of my manner, being now unused to social intercourse, I seem to be ungracious and forbidding, I am grateful and mindful, and that in the tablets of my heart I have written you down as one in whom I could trust,—were it given to me to trust in men and women." Then he turned round with his face to the wall and his back to his visitor, and so remained till Mr. Robarts had left him. "At any rate I wish you well through your trouble," said Robarts; and as he spoke he found that his own words were nearly choked by a sob that was rising in his throat.

He went away without another word and got out to his gig without seeing Mrs. Crawley. During one period of the interview he had been very angry with the man,—so angry as to make him almost declare to him-

self that he would take no more trouble on his behalf. Then he had been brought to acknowledge that Mr. Walker was right, and that Crawley was certainly mad. He was so mad, so far removed from the dominion of sound sense, that no jury could say that he was guilty and that he ought to be punished for his guilt. And, as he so resolved, he could not but ask himself the question, whether the charge of the parish ought to be left in the hands of such a man? But at last, just before he went, these feelings and these convictions gave way to pity, and he remembered simply the troubles which seemed to have been heaped on the head of this poor victim to misfortune. As he drove home he resolved that there was nothing left for him to do but to write to the dean. It was known to all who knew them both, that the dean and Mr. Crawley had lived together on the closest intimacy at college, and that that friendship had been maintained through life;—though, from the peculiarity of Mr. Crawley's character, the two had not been much together of late years. Seeing how things were going now, and hearing how pitiful was the plight in which Mr. Crawley was placed, the dean would, no doubt, feel it to be his duty to hasten his return to England. He was believed to be at this moment in Jerusalem, and it would be long before a letter could reach him; but there still wanted three months to the assizes, and his return might be probably effected before the end of February.

"I never was so distressed in my life," Mark Robarts said to his wife.

"And you think you have done no good?"

"Only this, that I have convinced myself that the poor man is not responsible for what he does, and

that for her sake, as well as for his own, some person should be enabled to interfere for his protection." Then he told Mrs. Robarts what Mr. Walker had said; also the message which Mr. Crawley had sent to the archdeacon. But they both agreed that that message need not be sent on any further.

CHAPTER XXII.

MAJOR GRANTLY AT HOME.

Mrs. Thorne had spoken very plainly in the advice which she had given to Major Grantly. "If I were you, I 'd be at Allington before twelve o'clock to-morrow." That had been Mrs. Thorne's advice; and though Major Grantly had no idea of making the journey so rapidly as the lady had proposed, still he thought that he would make it before long, and follow the advice in spirit if not to the letter. Mrs. Thorne had asked him if it was fair that the girl should be punished because of the father's fault; and the idea had been sweet to him that the infliction or non-infliction of such punishment should be in his hands. "You go and ask her," Mrs. Thorne had said. Well;—he would go and ask her. If it should turn out at last that he had married the daughter of a thief, and that he was disinherited for doing so,—an arrangement of circumstances which he had to teach himself to regard as very probable,—he would not love Grace the less on that account, or allow himself for one moment to repent what he had done. As he thought of all this he became somewhat in love with a small income, and imagined to himself what honours would be done to him by the Mrs. Thornes of the county when they should come to know in what way he had sacrificed

himself to his love. Yes;—they would go and live at Pau. He thought Pau would do. He would have enough of income for that;—and Edith would get lessons cheaply, and would learn to talk French fluently. He certainly would do it. He would go down to Allington, and ask Grace to be his wife; and bid her understand that if she loved him she could not be justified in refusing him by the circumstances of her father's position.

But he must go to Plumstead before he could go to Allington. He was engaged to spend his Christmas there, and must go now at once. There was not time for the journey to Allington before he was due at Plumstead. And, moreover, though he could not bring himself to resolve that he would tell his father what he was going to do,—"It would seem as though I were asking his leave!" he said to himself,—he thought that he would make a clean breast of it to his mother. It made him sad to think that he should cut the rope which fastened his own boat among the other boats in the home harbour at Plumstead, and that he should go out all alone into strange waters,—turned adrift altogether, as it were, from the Grantly fleet. If he could only get the promise of his mother's sympathy for Grace it would be something. He understood,—no one better than he,—the tendency of all his family to an uprising in the world, which tendency was almost as strong in his mother as in his father. And he had been by no means without a similar ambition himself, though with him the ambition had been only fitful, not enduring. He had a brother, a clergyman, a busy, stirring, eloquent London preacher, who got churches built, and was heard of far and wide as a rising man,

who had married a certain Lady Anne, the daughter of an earl, and who was already mentioned as a candidate for high places. How his sister was the wife of a marquis, and a leader in the fashionable world, the reader already knows. The archdeacon himself was a rich man, so powerful that he could afford to look down upon a bishop; and Mrs. Grantly, though there was left about her something of an old softness of nature, a touch of the former life which had been hers before the stream of her days had run gold, yet she, too, had taken kindly to wealth and high standing, and was by no means one of those who construe literally that passage of Scripture which tells us of the camel and the needle's eye. Our Henry Grantly, our major, knew himself to be his mother's favourite child,—knew himself to have become so since something of coolness had grown up between her and her august daughter. The augustness of the daughter had done much to reproduce the old freshness of which I have spoken in the mother's heart, and had specially endeared to her the son who, of all her children, was the least subject to the family failing. The clergyman, Charles Grantly, —he who had married the Lady Anne,—was his father's darling in these days. The old archdeacon would go up to London and be quite happy in his son's house. He met there the men whom he loved to meet, and heard the talk which he loved to hear. It was very fine having the Marquis of Hartletop for a son-in-law, but he had never cared to be much at Lady Hartletop's house. Indeed, the archdeacon cared to be in no house in which those around him were supposed to be bigger than himself. Such was the family fleet from out of which Henry Grantly was now proposing to sail

alone with his little boat,—taking Grace Crawley with him at the helm. "My father is a just man at the bottom," he said to himself, "and though he may not forgive me, he will not punish Edith."

But there was still left one of the family,—not a Grantly, indeed, but one so nearly allied to them as to have his boat moored in the same harbour,—who, as the major well knew, would thoroughly sympathise with him. This was old Mr. Harding, his mother's father,—the father of his mother and of his aunt Mrs. Arabin,—whose home was now at the deanery. He was also to be at Plumstead during this Christmas, and he at any rate would give a ready assent to such a marriage as that which the major was proposing for himself. But then poor old Mr. Harding had been thoroughly deficient in that ambition which had served to aggrandise the family into which his daughter had married. He was a poor old man, who, in spite of good friends,—for the late bishop of the diocese had been his dearest friend,—had never risen high in his profession, and had fallen even from the moderate altitude which he had attained. But he was a man whom all loved who knew him; and it was much to the credit of his son-in-law, the archdeacon, that, with all his tendencies to love rising suns, he had ever been true to Mr. Harding.

Major Grantly took his daughter with him, and on his arrival at Plumstead she of course was the first object of attention. Mrs. Grantly declared that she had grown immensely. The archdeacon complimented her red cheeks, and said that Cosby Lodge was as healthy a place as any in the county, while Mr. Harding, Edith's great-grandfather, drew slowly from his pocket

sundry treasures with which he had come prepared for the delight of the little girl. Charles Grantly and Lady Anne had no children, and the heir of all the Hartletops was too august to have been trusted to the embraces of his mother's grandfather. Edith, therefore, was all that he had in that generation, and of Edith he was prepared to be as indulgent as he had been, in their time, of his grandchildren the Grantlys, and still was of his grandchildren the Arabins, and had been before that of his own daughters. "She 's more like Eleanor than any one else," said the old man in a plaintive tone. Now Eleanor was Mrs. Arabin, the dean's wife, and was at this time,—if I were to say over forty I do not think I should be uncharitable. No one else saw the special likeness, but no one else remembered, as Mr. Harding did, what Eleanor had been when she was three years old.

"Aunt Nelly is in France," said the child.

"Yes, my darling, aunt Nelly is in France, and I wish she were at home. Aunt Nelly has been away a long time."

"I suppose she 'll stay till the dean picks her up on his way home?" said Mrs. Grantly.

"So she says in her letters. I heard from her yesterday, and I brought the letter, as I thought you 'd like to see it." Mrs. Grantly took the letter and read it, while her father still played with the child. The archdeacon and the major were standing together on the rug discussing the shooting at Chaldicotes, as to which the archdeacon had a strong opinion. "I 'm quite sure that a man with a place like that does more good by preserving than by leaving it alone. The better head of game he has the richer the county will

be generally. It is just the same with pheasants as it is with sheep and bullocks. A pheasant does n't cost more than he 's worth any more than a barn-door fowl. Besides, a man who preserves is always respected by the poachers, and the man who does n't is not."

"There 's something in that, sir, certainly," said the major.

"More than you think for, perhaps. Look at poor Sowerby, who went on there for years without a shilling. How he was respected, because he lived as the people around him expected a gentleman to live. Thorne will have a bad time of it if he tries to change things."

"Only think," exclaimed Mrs. Grantly, "when Eleanor wrote she had not heard of that affair of poor Mr. Crawley's!"

"Does she say anything about him?" asked the major.

"I 'll read what she says. 'I see in Galignani that a clergyman in Barsetshire has been committed for theft. Pray tell me who it is. Not the bishop, I hope, for the credit of the diocese?'"

"I wish it were," said the archdeacon.

"For shame, my dear," said his wife.

"No shame at all. If we are to have a thief among us, I 'd sooner find him in a bad man than a good one. Besides, we should have a change at the palace, which would be a great thing."

"But is it not odd that Eleanor should have heard nothing of it?" said Mrs. Grantly.

"It 's odd that you should not have mentioned it yourself."

"I did not, certainly; nor you, papa, I suppose?"

Mr. Harding acknowledged that he had not spoken of it, and then they calculated that perhaps she might not have received any letter from her husband written since the news had reached him. "Besides, why should he have mentioned it?" said the major. "He only knows as yet of the inquiry about the cheque, and can have heard nothing of what was done by the magistrates."

"Still it seems so odd that Eleanor should not have known of it, seeing that we have been talking of nothing else for the last week," said Mrs. Grantly.

For two days the major said not a word of Grace Crawley to any one. Nothing could be more courteous and complaisant than was his father's conduct to him. Anything that he wanted for Edith was to be done. For himself there was no trouble which would not be taken. His hunting, and his shooting, and his fishing seemed to have become matters of paramount consideration to his father. And then the archdeacon became very confidential about money matters,—not offering anything to his son, which, as he well knew, would have been seen through as palpable bribery and corruption,—but telling him of this little scheme and of that, of one investment and of another;—how he contemplated buying a small property here, and spending a few thousands on building there. "Of course it is all for you and your brother," said the archdeacon, with that benevolent sadness which is used habitually by fathers on such occasions; "and I like you to know what it is that I am doing. I told Charles about the London property the last time I was up," said the archdeacon, "and there shall be no difference between him and you, if all goes well." This was very good-natured

on the archdeacon's part, and was not strictly necessary, as Charles was the eldest son; but the major understood it perfectly. "There shall be an elysium opened to you, if only you will not do that terrible thing of which you spoke when last here." The archdeacon uttered no such words as these, and did not even allude to Grace Crawley; but the words were as good as spoken, and had they been spoken ever so plainly the major could not have understood them more clearly. He was quite awake to the loveliness of the elysium opened before him. He had had his moment of anxiety, whether his father would or would not make an elder son of his brother Charles. The whole thing was now put before him plainly. Give up Grace Crawley, and you shall share alike with your brother. Disgrace yourself by marrying her, and your brother shall have everything. There was the choice, and it was still open to him to take which side he pleased. Were he never to go near Grace Crawley again no one would blame him, unless it were Miss Prettyman or Mrs. Thorne. "Fill your glass, Henry," said the archdeacon. "You 'd better, I tell you, for there is no more of it left." Then the major filled his glass and sipped the wine, and swore to himself that he would go down to Allington at once. What! Did his father think to bribe him by giving him '20 port? He would certainly go down to Allington, and he would tell his mother to-morrow morning, or certainly on the next day, what he was going to do. "Pity it should be all gone; is n't it, sir?" said the archdeacon to his father-in-law. "It has lasted my time," said Mr. Harding, "and I 'm very much obliged to it. Dear, dear; how well I remember your father giving the order for it!

There were two pipes, and somebody said it was a heady wine. 'If the prebendaries and rectors can't drink it,' said your father, 'the curates will.'"

"Curates indeed!" said the archdeacon. "It 's too good for a bishop, unless one of the right sort."

"Your father used to say those things, but with him the poorer the guest the better the cheer. When he had a few clergymen round him, how he loved to make them happy!"

"Never talked shop to them, did he?" said the archdeacon.

"Not after dinner, at any rate. Goodness gracious, when one thinks of it! Do you remember how we used to play cards?"

"Every night regularly;—threepenny points, and sixpence on the rubber," said the archdeacon.

"Dear, dear! How things are changed! And I remember when the clergymen did more of the dancing in Barchester than all the other young men in the city put together."

"And a good set they were;—gentlemen every one of them. It 's well that some of them don't dance now;—that is, for the girls' sake."

"I sometimes sit and wonder," said Mr. Harding, "whether your father's spirit ever comes back to the old house and sees the changes,—and if so whether he approves them."

"Approves them!" said the archdeacon.

"Well;—yes. I think he would, upon the whole. I 'm sure of this; he would not disapprove, because the new ways are changed from his ways. He never thought himself infallible. And do you know, my dear, I am not sure that it is n't all for the best. I some-

times think that some of us were very idle when we were young. I was, I know."

"I worked hard enough," said the archdeacon.

"Ah, yes; you. But most of us took it very easily. Dear, dear! When I think of it, and see how hard they work now, and remember what pleasant times we used to have,—I don't feel sometimes quite sure."

"I believe the work was done a great deal better than it is now," said the archdeacon. "There was n't so much fuss, but there was more reality. And men were men, and clergymen were gentlemen."

"Yes;—they were gentlemen."

"Such a creature as that old woman at the palace could n't have held his head up among us. That 's what has come from Reform. A reformed House of Commons makes Lord Brock prime-minister, and then your prime-minister makes Dr. Proudie a bishop! Well;—it will last my time, I suppose."

"It has lasted mine,—like the wine," said Mr. Harding.

"There 's one glass more, and you shall have it, sir." Then Mr. Harding drank the last glass of the 1820 port, and they went into the drawing-room.

On the next morning after breakfast the major went out for a walk by himself. His father had suggested to him that he should go over to shoot at Framley, and had offered him the use of everything the archdeaconry possessed in the way of horses, dogs, guns, and carriages. But the major would have none of these things. He would go out and walk by himself. "He 's not thinking of her; is he?" said the archdeacon to his wife, in a whisper. "I don't know. I think he is," said Mrs. Grantly. "It will be so much

the better for Charles, if he does," said the archdeacon grimly; and the look of his face as he spoke was by no means pleasant. "You will do nothing unjust, archdeacon," said his wife. "I will do as I like with my own," said he. And then he also went out and took a walk by himself.

That evening after dinner, there was no 1820 port, and no recollection of old days. They were rather dull, the three of them, as they sat together,—and dulness is always more unendurable than sadness. Old Mr. Harding went to sleep and the archdeacon was cross. "Henry," he said, "you have n't a word to throw to a dog."

"I 've got rather a headache this evening, sir," said the major. The archdeacon drank two glasses of wine, one after another, quickly. Then he woke his father-in-law gently, and went off. "Is there anything the matter?" asked the old man. "Nothing particular. My father seems to be a little cross." "Ah! I 've been to sleep and I ought n't. It 's my fault. We 'll go in and smooth him down." But the archdeacon would n't be smoothed down on that occasion. He would let his son see the difference between a father pleased and a father displeased,—or rather between a father pleasant and a father unpleasant. "He has n't said anything to you, has he?" said the archdeacon that night to his wife. "Not a word;—as yet." "If he does it without the courage to tell us, I shall think him a cur," said the archdeacon. "But he did tell you," said Mrs. Grantly, standing up for her favourite son; "and, for the matter of that, he has courage enough for anything. If he does it, I shall always say that he has been driven to it by your threats."

"That 's sheer nonsense," said the archdeacon.

"It 's not nonsense at all," said Mrs. Grantly.

"Then I suppose I was to hold my tongue and say nothing?" said the archdeacon; and as he spoke he banged the door between his dressing-room and Mrs. Grantly's bedroom.

On the first day of the new year Major Grantly spoke his mind to his mother. The archdeacon had gone into Barchester, having in vain attempted to induce his son to go with him. Mr. Harding was in the library reading a little and sleeping a little, and dreaming of old days and old friends, and perhaps, sometimes, of the old wine. Mrs. Grantly was alone in a small sitting-room which she frequented upstairs, when suddenly her son entered the room. "Mother," he said, "I think it better to tell you that I am going to Allington."

"To Allington, Henry?" She knew very well who was at Allington, and what must be the business which would take him there.

"Yes, mother. Miss Crawley is there, and there are circumstances which make it incumbent on me to see her without delay."

"What circumstances, Henry?"

"As I intend to ask her to be my wife I think it best to do so now. I owe it to her and to myself that she should not think that I am deterred by her father's position."

"But would it not be reasonable that you should be deterred by her father's position?"

"No, I think not. I think it would be dishonest as well as ungenerous. I cannot bring myself to brook such delay. Of course I am alive to the misfortune

which has fallen upon her,—upon her and me, too, should she ever become my wife. But it is one of those burdens which a man should have shoulders broad enough to bear."

"Quite so, if she were your wife, or even if you were engaged to her. Then honour would require it of you, as well as affection. As it is, your honour does not require it, and I think you should hesitate, for all our sakes, and especially for Edith's."

"It will do Edith no harm; and, mother, if you alone were concerned, I think you would feel that it would not hurt you."

"I was not thinking of myself, Henry."

"As for my father, the very threats which he has used make me conscious that I have only to measure the price. He has told me that he will stop my allowance."

"But that may not be the worst. Think how you are situated. You are the younger son of a man who will be held to be justified in making an elder son, if he thinks fit to do so."

"I can only hope that he will be fair to Edith. If you will tell him that from me, it is all that I will ask you to do."

"But you will see him yourself?"

"No, mother; not till I have been to Allington. Then I will see him again or not, just as he pleases. I shall stop at Guestwick, and will write to you a line from thence. If my father decides on doing anything, let me know at once, as it will be necessary that I should get rid of the lease of my house."

"Oh, Henry!"

"I have thought a great deal about it, mother, and I believe I am right. Whether I am right or wrong,

I shall do it. I will not ask you now for any promise or pledge; but should Miss Crawley become my wife, I hope that you at least will not refuse to see her as your daughter." Having so spoken, he kissed his mother, and was about to leave the room; but she held him by his arm, and he saw that her eyes were full of tears. "Dearest mother, if I grieve you I am sorry indeed."

"Not me, not me, not me," she said.

"For my father, I cannot help it. Had he not threatened me I should have told him also. As he has done so, you must tell him. But give him my kindest love."

"Oh, Henry; you will be ruined. You will, indeed. Can you not wait? Remember how headstrong your father is, and yet how good;—and how he loves you! Think of all that he has done for you. When did he refuse you anything?"

"He has been good to me, but in this I cannot obey him. He should not ask me."

"You are wrong. You are indeed. He has a right to expect that you will not bring disgrace upon the family."

"Nor will I;—except such disgrace as may attend upon poverty. Good-bye, mother. I wish you could have said one kind word to me."

"Have I not said a kind word?"

"Not as yet, mother."

"I would not for worlds speak unkindly to you. If it were not for your father I would bid you bring whom you pleased home to me as your wife; and I would be as a mother to her. And if this girl should become your wife——"

"It shall not be my fault if she does not."

"I will try to love her—some day."

Then the major went, leaving Edith at the rectory, as requested by his mother. His own dog-cart and his servant were at Plumstead, and he drove himself home to Cosby Lodge.

When the archdeacon returned the news was told him at once. "Henry has gone to Allington to propose to Miss Crawley," said Mrs. Grantly.

"Gone,—without speaking to me!"

"He left his love, and said that it was useless his remaining, as he knew he should only offend you."

"He has made his bed, and he must lie upon it," said the archdeacon. And then there was not another word said about Grace Crawley on that occasion.

CHAPTER XXIII.

MISS LILY DALE'S RESOLUTION.

THE ladies at the Small House at Allington breakfasted always at nine,—a liberal nine; and the postman whose duty it was to deliver letters in that village at half-past eight, being also liberal in his ideas as to time, always arrived punctually in the middle of breakfast, so that Mrs. Dale expected her letters, and Lily hers, just before their second cup of tea, as though the letters formed a part of the morning meal. Jane, the maid-servant, always brought them in, and handed them to Mrs. Dale,—for Lily had in these days come to preside at the breakfast-table; and then there would be an examination of the outsides before the envelopes were violated, and as each knew pretty well all the circumstances of the correspondence of the other, there would be some guessing as to what this or that epistle might contain; and after that a reading out loud of passages, and not infrequently of the entire letter. But now, at the time of which I am speaking, Grace Crawley was at the Small House, and therefore the common practice was somewhat in abeyance.

On one of the first days of the new year Jane brought in the letters as usual, and handed them to Mrs. Dale. Lily was at the time occupied with the teapot, but still she saw the letters, and had not her hands so full as to

be debarred from the expression of her usual anxiety. "Mamma, I 'm sure I see two there for me," she said. "Only one for you, Lily," said Mrs. Dale. Lily instantly knew from the tone of the voice that some letter had come, which by the very aspect of the handwriting had disturbed her mother. "There is one for you, my dear," said Mrs. Dale, throwing a letter across the table to Grace. "And one for you, Lily, from Bell. The others are for me."

"And whom are yours from, mamma?" asked Lily. "One is from Mrs. Jones; the other, I think, is a letter on business." Then Lily said nothing further, but she observed that her mother only opened one of her letters at the breakfast-table. Lily was very patient; —not by nature, I think, but by exercise and practice. She had once, in her life, been too much in a hurry; and having then burned herself grievously, she now feared the fire. She did not therefore follow her mother after breakfast, but sat with Grace over the fire, hemming diligently at certain articles of clothing which were intended for use in the Hogglestock parsonage. The two girls were making a set of new shirts for Mr. Crawley. "But I know he will ask where they come from," said Grace; "and then mamma will be scolded." "But I hope he 'll wear them," said Lily. "Sooner or later he will," said Grace; "because mamma manages generally to have her way at last." Then they went on for an hour or so, talking about the home affairs at Hogglestock. But during the whole time Lily's mind was intent upon her mother's letter.

Nothing was said about it at lunch, and nothing when they walked out after lunch, for Lily was very patient. But during the walk Mrs. Dale became aware

that her daughter was uneasy. These two watched each other unconsciously with a closeness which hardly allowed a glance of the eye, certainly not a tone of the voice, to pass unobserved. To Mrs. Dale it was everything in the world that her daughter should be, if not happy at heart, at least tranquil; and to Lily, who knew that her mother was always thinking of her, and of her alone, her mother was the only human divinity now worthy of adoration. But nothing was said about the letter during the walk.

When they came home it was nearly dusk, and it was their habit to sit up for a while without candles, talking, till the evening had in truth set in and the unmistakable and enforced idleness of remaining without candles was apparent. During this time, Lily, demanding patience of herself all the while, was thinking what she would do, or rather what she would say, about the letter. That nothing could be done or said in the presence of Grace Crawley was a matter of course, nor would she do or say anything to get rid of Grace. She would be very patient; but she would, at last, ask her mother about the letter.

And then, as luck would have it, Grace Crawley got up and left the room. Lily still waited for a few minutes, and, in order that her patience might be thoroughly exercised, she said a word or two about her sister Bell; how the eldest child's whooping-cough was nearly well, and how the baby was doing wonderful things with its first tooth. But as Mrs. Dale had already seen Bell's letter, all this was not intensely interesting. At last Lily came to the point and asked her question. "Mamma, from whom was that other letter which you got this morning?"

Our story will perhaps be best told by communicating the letter to the reader before it was discussed with Lily. The letter was as follows:—

"General Committee Office, January, 186—."

I should have said that Mrs. Dale had not opened the letter till she had found herself in the solitude of her own bedroom; and that then, before doing so, she had examined the handwriting with anxious eyes. When she first received it she thought she knew the writer, but was not sure. Then she had glanced at the impression over the fastening, and had known at once from whom the letter had come. It was from Mr. Crosbie, the man who had brought so much trouble into her house, who had jilted her daughter; the only man in the world whom she had a right to regard as a positive enemy to herself. She had no doubt about it, as she tore the envelope open; and yet, when the address given made her quite sure, a new feeling of shivering came upon her, and she asked herself whether it might not be better that she should send his letter back to him without reading it. But she read it.

"Madam" (the letter began),—"You will be very much surprised to hear from me, and I am quite aware that I am not entitled to the ordinary courtesy of an acknowledgment from you, should you be pleased to throw my letter on one side as unworthy of your notice. But I cannot refrain from addressing you, and must leave it to you to reply to me or not, as you may think fit.

"I will only refer to that episode of my life with which you are acquainted, for the sake of acknowledg-

ing my great fault and of assuring you that I did not go unpunished. It would be useless for me now to attempt to explain to you the circumstances which led me into that difficulty which ended in so great a blunder; but I will ask you to believe that my folly was greater than my sin.

"But I will come to my point at once. You are, no doubt, aware that I married a daughter of Lord De Courcy, and that I was separated from my wife a few weeks after our unfortunate marriage. It is now something over twelve months since she died at Baden-Baden in her mother's house. I never saw her since the day we first parted. I have not a word to say against her. The fault was mine in marrying a woman whom I did not love and had never loved. When I married Lady Alexandrina I loved, not her, but your daughter.

"I believe I may venture to say to you that your daughter once loved me. From the day on which I last wrote to you that terrible letter which told you of my fate I have never mentioned the name of Lily Dale to human ears. It has been too sacred for my mouth, —too sacred for the intercourse of any friendship with which I have been blessed. I now use it for the first time to you, in order that I may ask whether it be possible that her old love should ever live again. Mine has lived always,—has never faded for an hour, making me miserable during the years that have passed since I saw her, but capable of making me very happy, if I may be allowed to see her again.

"You will understand my purpose now as well as though I were to write pages. I have no scheme formed in my head for seeing your daughter again.

How can I dare to form a scheme, when I am aware that the chance of success must be so strong against me? But if you will tell me that there can be a gleam of hope, I will obey any commands that you can put upon me in any way that you may point out. I am free again,—and she is free. I love her with all my heart, and seem to long for nothing in the world but that she should become my wife. Whether any of her old love may still abide with her, you will know. If it do, it may even yet prompt her to forgive one who, in spite of falseness of conduct, has yet been true to her in heart.

"I have the honour to be, Madam,

"Your most obedient servant,

"ADOLPHUS CROSBIE."

This was the letter which Mrs. Dale had received, and as to which she had not as yet said a word to Lily, or even made up her mind whether she would say a word or not. Dearly as the mother and daughter loved each other, thorough as was the confidence between them, yet the name of Adolphus Crosbie had not been mentioned between them oftener, perhaps, than half-a-dozen times since the blow had been struck. Mrs. Dale knew that their feelings about the man were altogether different. She, herself, not only condemned him for what he had done, believing it to be impossible that any shadow of excuse could be urged for his offence, thinking that the fault had shown the man to be mean beyond redemption;—but she had allowed herself actually to hate him. He had in one sense murdered her daughter, and she believed that she could never forgive him. But Lily, as her mother well knew,

had forgiven this man altogether, had made excuses for him which cleansed his sin of all its blackness in her own eyes, and was to this day anxious as ever for his welfare and his happiness. Mrs. Dale feared that Lily did in truth love him still. If it was so, was she not bound to show her this letter? Lily was old enough to judge for herself,—old enough, and wise enough too. Mrs. Dale told herself half-a-score of times that morning that she could not be justified in keeping the letter from her daughter.

But yet she much wished that the letter had never been written, and would have given very much to be able to put it out of the way without injustice to Lily. To her thinking it would be impossible that Lily should be happy in marrying such a man. Such a marriage now would be, as Mrs. Dale thought, a degradation to her daughter. A terrible injury had been done to her; but such reparation as this would, in Mrs. Dale's eyes, only make the injury deeper. And yet Lily loved the man; and, loving him, how could she resist the temptation of his offer? "Mamma, from whom was that letter which you got this morning?" Lily asked. For a few moments Mrs. Dale remained silent. "Mamma," continued Lily, "I think I know whom it was from. If you tell me to ask nothing further, of course I will not."

"No, Lily; I cannot tell you that."

"Then, mamma, out with it at once. What is the use of shivering on the brink?"

"It was from Mr. Crosbie."

"I knew it. I cannot tell you why, but I knew it. And now, mamma,—am I to read it?"

"You shall do as you please, Lily."

"Then I please to read it."

"Listen to me a moment first. For myself, I wish that the letter had never been written. It tells badly for the man as I think of it. I cannot understand how any man could have brought himself to address either you or me, after having acted as he acted."

"But, mamma, we differ about all that, you know."

"Now he has written, and there is the letter,—if you choose to read it."

Lily had it in her hand, but she still sat motionless, holding it. "You think, mamma, I ought not to read it?"

"You must judge for yourself, dearest."

"And if I do not read it, what shall you do, mamma?"

"I shall do nothing;—or, perhaps, I should in such a case acknowledge it, and tell him that we have nothing more to say to him."

"That would be very stern."

"He has done that which makes sternness necessary."

Then Lily was again silent, and still she sat motionless, with the letter in her hand. "Mamma," she said, at last, "if you tell me not to read it I will give it you back unread. If you bid me exercise my own judgment, I shall take it upstairs and read it."

"You must exercise your own judgment," said Mrs. Dale. Then Lily got up from her chair and walked slowly out of the room, and went to her mother's chamber. The thoughts which passed through Mrs. Dale's mind while her daughter was reading the letter were very sad. She could find no comfort anywhere. Lily, she told herself, would surely give way to this man's renewed expressions of affection, and she, Mrs.

Dale herself, would be called upon to give her child to a man whom she could neither love nor respect;—whom, for aught she knew, she could never cease to hate. And she could not bring herself to believe that Lily would be happy with such a man. As for her own life, desolate as it would be,—she cared little for that. Mothers know that their daughters will leave them. Even widowed mothers, mothers with but one child left,—such a one as was this mother,—are aware that they will be left alone, and they can bring themselves to welcome the sacrifice of themselves with something of satisfaction. Mrs. Dale and Lily had, indeed, of late become bound together especially, so that the mother had been justified in regarding the link which joined them as being firmer than that by which most daughters are bound to their mothers;—but in all that she would have found no regret. Even now, in these very days, she was hoping that Lily might yet be brought to give herself to John Eames. But she could not, after all that was come and gone, be happy in thinking that Lily should be given to Adolphus Crosbie.

When Mrs. Dale went upstairs to her own room before dinner Lily was not there; nor were they alone together again that evening except for a moment, when Lily, as was usual, went into her mother's room when she was undressing. But neither of them then said a word about the letter. Lily during dinner and throughout the evening had borne herself well, giving no sign of special emotion, keeping to herself entirely her own thoughts about the proposition made to her. And afterwards she had progressed diligently with the fabrication of Mr. Crawley's shirts, as though she had no

such letter in her pocket. And yet there was not a moment in which she was not thinking of it. To Grace, just before she went to bed, she did say one word. "I wonder whether it can ever come to a person to be so placed that there can be no doing right, let what will be done;—that, do or not do, as you may, it must be wrong?"

"I hope you are not in such a condition," said Grace.

"I am something near it," said Lily; "but perhaps if I look long enough I shall see the light."

"I hope it will be a happy light at last," said Grace, who thought that Lily was referring only to John Eames.

At noon on the next day Lily had still said nothing to her mother about the letter; and then what she said was very little. "When must you answer Mr. Crosbie, mamma?"

"When, my dear?"

"I mean how long may you take? It need not be to-day?"

"No;—certainly not to-day."

"Then I will talk over it with you to-morrow. It wants some thinking;—does it not, mamma?"

"It would not want much with me, Lily."

"But then, mamma, you are not I. Believing as I believe, feeling as I feel, it wants some thinking. That 's what I mean."

"I wish I could help you, my dear."

"You shall help me,—to-morrow." The morrow came and Lily was still very patient; but she had prepared herself, and had prepared the time also, so that in the hour of the gloaming she was alone with

her mother, and sure that she might remain alone with her for an hour or so. "Mamma, sit there," she said; "I will sit down here, and then I can lean against you and be comfortable. You can bear as much of me as that,—can't you, mamma?" Then Mrs. Dale put her arm over Lily's shoulder, and embraced her daughter. "And now, mamma, we will talk about this wonderful letter."

"I do not know, dear, that I have anything to say about it."

"But you must have something to say about it, mamma. You must bring yourself to have something to say,—to have a great deal to say."

"You know what I think as well as though I talked for a week."

"That won't do, mamma. Come, you must not be hard with me."

"Hard, Lily!"

"I don't mean that you will hurt me, or not give me any food,—or that you will not go on caring about me more than anything else in the whole world ten times over——" And Lily as she spoke tightened the embrace of her mother's arm around her neck. "I 'm not afraid you 'll be hard in that way. But you must soften your heart so as to be able to mention his name and talk about him, and tell me what I ought to do. You must see with my eyes, and hear with my ears, and feel with my heart;—and then, when I know that you have done that, I must judge with your judgment."

"I wish you to use your own."

"Yes;—because you won't see with my eyes and hear with my ears. That 's what I call being hard. Though you should feed me with blood from your

breast, I should call you a hard pelican, unless you could give me also the sympathy which I demand from you. You see, mamma, we have never allowed ourselves to speak of this man."

"What need has there been, dearest?"

"Only because we have been thinking of him. Out of the full heart the mouth speaketh;—that is, the mouth does so when the full heart is allowed to have its own way comfortably."

"There are things which should be forgotten."

"Forgotten, mamma!"

"The memory of which should not be fostered by much talking."

"I have never blamed you, mamma; never, even in my heart. I have known how good and gracious and sweet you have been. But I have often accused myself of cowardice because I have not allowed his name to cross my lips either to you or to Bell. To talk of forgetting such an accident as that is a farce. And as for fostering the memory of it——! Do you think that I have ever spent a night from that time to this without thinking of him? Do you imagine that I have ever crossed our own lawn, or gone down through the garden-path there, without thinking of the times when he and I walked there together? There needs no fostering for such memories as those. They are weeds which will grow rank and strong though nothing be done to foster them. There is the earth and the rain, and that is enough for them. You cannot kill them if you would, and they certainly will not die because you are careful not to hoe and rake the ground."

"Lily, you forget how short the time has been as yet."

"I have thought it very long; but the truth is,

mamma, that this non-fostering of memories, as you call it, has not been the real cause of our silence. We have not spoken of Mr. Crosbie because we have not thought alike about him. Had you spoken you would have spoken with anger, and I could not endure to hear him abused. That has been it."

"Partly so, Lily."

"Now you must talk of him, and you must not abuse him. We must talk of him, because something must be done about his letter. Even if it be left unanswered it cannot be so left without discussion. And yet you must say no evil of him."

"Am I to think that he behaved well?"

"No, mamma; you are not to think that; but you are to look upon his fault as a fault that has been forgiven."

"It cannot be forgotten, dear."

"But, mamma, when you go to heaven——"

"My dear!"

"But you will go to heaven, mamma, and why should I not speak of it? You will go to heaven, and yet I suppose you have been wicked, because we are all very wicked. But you won't be told of your wickedness there. You won't be hated there, because you were this or that when you were here."

"I hope not, Lily; but is n't your argument almost profane?"

"No; I don't think so. We ask to be forgiven just as we forgive. That is the way in which we hope to be forgiven, and therefore it is the way in which we ought to forgive. When you say that prayer at night, mamma, do you ever ask yourself whether you have forgiven him?"

"I forgive him as far as humanity can forgive. I would do him no injury."

"But if you and I are forgiven only after that fashion we shall never get to heaven." Lily paused for some further answer from her mother, but as Mrs. Dale was silent she allowed that portion of the subject to pass as completed. "And now, mamma, what answer do you think we ought to send to his letter?"

"My dear, how am I to say? You know I have said already that if I could act on my own judgment I would send none."

"But that was said in the bitterness of gall."

"Come, Lily, say what you think yourself. We shall get on better when you have brought yourself to speak. Do you think that you wish to see him again?"

"I don't know, mamma. Upon the whole, I think not."

"Then in heaven's name let me write and tell him so."

"Stop a moment, mamma. There are two persons here to be considered,—or rather three."

"I would not have you think of me in such a question."

"I know you would not; but never mind, and let me go on. The three of us are concerned, at any rate; you, and he, and I. I am thinking of him now. We have all suffered, but I do believe that hitherto he has had the worst of it."

"And who has deserved the worst?"

"Mamma, how can you go back in that way? We have agreed that that should be regarded as done and gone. He has been very unhappy, and now we see what remedy he proposes to himself for his misery.

Do I flatter myself if I allow myself to look at it in that way?"

"Perhaps he thinks he is offering a remedy for your misery."

As this was said Lily turned round slowly and looked up into her mother's face. "Mamma," she said, "that is very cruel. I did not think you could be so cruel. How can you, who believe him to be so selfish, think that?"

"It is very hard to judge of men's motives. I have never supposed him to be so black that he would not wish to make atonement for the evil he has done."

"If I thought that, there certainly could be but one answer."

"Who can look into a man's heart and judge all the sources of his actions? There are mixed feelings there, no doubt. Remorse for what he has done; regret for what he has lost;—something, perhaps, of the purity of love."

"Yes, something,—I hope something,—for his sake."

"But when a horse kicks and bites, you know his nature and do not go near him. When a man has cheated you once, you think he will cheat you again, and you do not deal with him. You do not look to gather grapes from thistles, after you have found that they are thistles."

"I still go for the roses though I have often torn my hand with thorns in looking for them."

"But you do not pluck those that have become cankered in the blowing."

"Because he was once at fault, will he be cankered always?"

"I would not trust him."

"Now, mamma, see how different we are; or, rather, how different it is when one judges for oneself, or for another. If it were simply myself, and my own future fate in life, I would trust him with it all to-morrow without a word. I should go to him as a gambler goes to the gambling table, knowing that if I lost everything I could hardly be poorer than I was before. But I should have a better hope than the gambler is justified in having. That, however, is not my difficulty. And when I think of him I can see a prospect of success for the gambler. I think so well of myself that, loving him as I do;—yes, mamma, do not be uneasy; loving him as I do, I believe I could be a comfort to him. I think that he might be better with me than without me. That is, he would be so, if he could teach himself to look back upon the past as I can do, and to judge of me as I can judge of him."

"He has nothing, at least, for which to condemn you."

"But he would have were I to marry him now. He would condemn me because I had forgiven him. He would condemn me because I had borne what he had done to me, and had still loved him,—loved him through it all. He would feel and know the weakness. And there is weakness! I have been weak in not being able to rid myself of him altogether. He would recognise this after a while, and would despise me for it. But he would not see what there is of devotion to him in my being able to bear the taunts of the world in going back to him,—and your taunts and my own taunts. I should have to bear his also,—not spoken aloud, but to be seen in his face, and heard in his

voice,—and that I could not endure. If he despised me, and he would, that would make us both unhappy. Therefore, mamma, tell him not to come; tell him that he can never come; but, if it be possible, tell him this tenderly." Then she got up and walked away, as though she were going out of the room; but her mother had caught her before the door was open.

"Lily," she said, "if you think you can be happy with him, he shall come."

"No, mamma, no. I have been looking for the light ever since I read his letter, and I think I see it. And now, mamma, I will make a clean breast of it. From the moment in which I heard that that poor woman was dead, I have been fluttered. It has been weak of me, and silly, and contemptible. But I could not help it. I kept on asking myself whether he would ever think of me now. Well; he has answered the question; and has so done it that he has forced upon me the necessity of a resolution. I have resolved, and I believe that I shall be the better for it."

The letter which Mrs. Dale wrote to Mr. Crosbie was as follows:—

"Mrs. Dale presents her compliments to Mr. Crosbie, and begs to assure him that it will not now be possible that he should renew the relations which were broken off, three years ago, between him and Mrs. Dale's family."

It was very short, certainly, and it did not by any means satisfy Mrs. Dale. But she did not know how to say more without saying too much. The object of her letter was to save him the trouble of a futile perse-

verance, and them from the annoyance of persecution; and this she wished to do without mentioning her daughter's name. And she was determined that no word should escape her in which there was any touch of severity, any hint of an accusation. So much she owed to Lily in return for all that Lily was prepared to abandon. "There is my note," she said at last, offering it to her daughter. "I did not mean to see it," said Lily; "and, mamma, I will not read it now. Let it go. I know you have been good and have not scolded him."

"I have not scolded him certainly," said Mrs. Dale. And then the letter was sent.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MRS. DOBBS BROUGHTON'S DINNER-PARTY.

Mr. John Eames, of the Income-tax Office, had in these days risen so high in the world that people in the west end of town, and very respectable people too,—people living in South Kensington, in neighbourhoods not far from Belgravia, and in very handsome houses round Bayswater,—were glad to ask him out to dinner. Money had been left to him by an earl, and rumour had of course magnified that money. He was a private secretary, which is in itself a great advance on being a mere clerk. And he had become the particularly intimate friend of an artist who had pushed himself into high fashion during the last year or two,—one Conway Dalrymple, whom the rich English world was beginning to pet and pelt with gilt sugar-plums, and who seemed to take very kindly to petting and gilt sugar-plums. I don't know whether the friendship of Conway Dalrymple had not done as much to secure John Eames his position at the Bayswater dinner-tables, as had either the private secretaryship, or the earl's money; and yet, when they had first known each other, now only two or three years ago, Conway Dalrymple had been the poorer man of the two. Some chance had brought them together, and they had lived in the same rooms for nearly two years. This arrange-

ment had been broken up, and the Conway Dalrymple of these days had a studio of his own, somewhere near Kensington Palace, where he painted portraits of young countesses, and in which he had even painted a young duchess. It was the peculiar merit of his pictures,—so at least said the art-loving world,—that, though the likeness was always good, the stiffness of the modern portrait was never there. There was also ever some story told in Dalrymple's pictures over and above the story of the portraiture. This countess was drawn as a fairy with wings, that countess as a goddess with a helmet. The thing took for a time, and Conway Dalrymple was picking up his gilt sugar-plums with considerable rapidity.

On a certain day he and John Eames were to dine out together at a certain house in that Bayswater district. It was a large mansion, if not made of stone yet looking very stony, with thirty windows at least, all of them with cut-stone frames, requiring, let me say, at least four thousand a year for its maintenance. And its owner, Dobbs Broughton, a man very well known both in the City and over the grass in Northamptonshire, was supposed to have a good deal more than four thousand a year. Mrs. Dobbs Broughton, a very beautiful woman, who certainly was not yet thirty-five, let her worst enemies say what they might, had been painted by Conway Dalrymple as a Grace. There were, of course, three Graces in the picture, but each Grace was Mrs. Dobbs Broughton repeated. We all know how Graces stand sometimes; two Graces looking one way, and one the other. In this picture, Mrs. Dobbs Broughton as centre Grace looked you full in the face. The same lady looked away from you, dis-

playing her left shoulder, as one side Grace, and displaying her right shoulder as the other side Grace. For this pretty toy Mr. Conway Dalrymple had picked up a gilt sugar-plum to the tune of six hundred pounds, and had, moreover, won the heart both of Mr. and Mrs. Dobbs Broughton. "Upon my word, Johnny," Dalrymple had said to his friend, "he 's a deuced good fellow, has really a good glass of claret,—which is getting rarer and rarer every day,—and will mount you for a day, whenever you please, down at Market Harboro'. Come and dine with them." Johnny Eames condescended, and did go and dine with Mr. Dobbs Broughton. I wonder whether he remembered, when Conway Dalrymple was talking of the rarity of good claret, how much beer the young painter used to drink when they were out together in the country, as they used to be occasionally, three years ago; and how the painter had then been used to complain that bitter beer cost threepence a glass, instead of twopence, which had hitherto been the recognised price of the article. In those days the sugar-plums had not been gilt, and had been much rarer.

Johnny Eames and his friend went together to the house of Mr. Dobbs Broughton. As Dalrymple lived close to the Broughtons, Eames picked him up in a cab. "Filthy things these cabs are," said Dalrymple, as he got into the Hansom.

"I don't know about that," said Johnny. "They 're pretty good, I think."

"Foul things," said Conway. "Don't you feel what a draught comes in here because the glass is cracked? I 'd have one of my own, only I should never know what to do with it."

"The greatest nuisance on earth, I should think," said Johnny.

"If you could always have it standing ready round the corner," said the artist, "it would be delightful. But one would want half-a-dozen horses and two or three men for that."

"I think the stands are the best," said Johnny.

They were a little late,—a little later than they should have been had they considered that Eames was to be introduced to his new acquaintances. But he had already lived long enough before the world to be quite at his ease in such circumstances, and he entered Mrs. Broughton's drawing-room with his pleasantest smile upon his face. But as he entered he saw a sight which made him look serious in spite of his efforts to the contrary. Mr. Adolphus Crosbie, secretary to the Board at the General Committee Office, was standing on the rug before the fire.

"Who will be there?" Eames had asked of his friend, when the suggestion to go and dine with Dobbs Broughton had been made to him.

"Impossible to say," Conway had replied. "A certain horrible fellow of the name of Musselboro will almost certainly be there. He always is when they have anything of a swell dinner-party. He is a sort of partner of Broughton's in the city. He wears a lot of chains and has elaborate whiskers, and an elaborate waistcoat, which is worse; and he does n't wash his hands as often as he ought to do."

"An objectionable party, rather, I should say," said Eames.

"Well, yes; Musselboro is objectionable. He 's very good-humoured, you know, and good-looking in

a sort of way, and goes everywhere; that is, among people of this sort. Of course he 's not hand-and-glove with Lord Derby; and I wish he could be made to wash his hands. They have n't any other standing dish, and you may meet anybody. They always have a Member of Parliament; they generally manage to capture a baronet; and I have met a Peer there. On that august occasion Musselboro was absent."

So instructed, Eames, on entering the room, looked round at once for Mr. Musselboro. "If I don't see the whiskers and chain," he had said, "I shall know there 's a Peer." Mr. Musselboro was in the room, but Eames had descried Mr. Crosbie long before he had seen Mr. Musselboro.

There was no reason for confusion on his part in meeting Crosbie. They had both loved Lily Dale. Crosbie might have been successful, but for his own fault. Eames had on one occasion been thrown into contact with him, and on that occasion had quarrelled with him, and had beaten him, giving him a black eye, and in this way obtaining some mastery over him. There was no reason why he should be ashamed of meeting Crosbie; and yet when he saw him, the blood mounted all over his face, and he forgot to make any further search for Mr. Musselboro.

"I am so much obliged to Mr. Dalrymple for bringing you," said Mrs. Dobbs Broughton very sweetly, "only he ought to have come sooner. Naughty man! I know it was his fault. Will you take Miss Demolines down? Miss Demolines,—Mr. Eames."

Mr. Dobbs Broughton was somewhat sulky and had not welcomed our hero very cordially. He was beginning to think that Conway Dalrymple gave himself

airs, and did not sufficiently understand that a man who had horses at Market Harboro' and '41 Lafitte was at any rate as good as a painter who was pelted with gilt sugar-plums for painting countesses. But he was a man whose ill-humour never lasted long, and he was soon pressing his wine on Johnny Eames as though he loved him dearly.

But there was yet a few minutes before they went down to dinner, and Johnny Eames, as he endeavoured to find something to say to Miss Demolines,—which was difficult, as he did not in the least know Miss Demolines' line of conversation,—was aware that his efforts were impeded by thoughts of Mr. Crosbie. The man looked older than when he had last seen him,—so much older that Eames was astonished. He was bald, or becoming bald; and his whiskers were grey, or were becoming grey, and he was much fatter. Johnny Eames, who was always thinking of Lily Dale, could not now keep himself from thinking of Adolphus Crosbie. He saw at a glance that the man was in mourning, though there was nothing but his shirt-studs by which to tell it; and he knew that he was in mourning for his wife. "I wish she might have lived for ever," Johnny said to himself.

He had not yet been definitely called upon by the entrance of the servant to offer his arm to Miss Demolines, when Crosbie walked across to him from the rug and addressed him.

"Mr. Eames," said he, "it is some time since we met." And he offered his hand to Johnny.

"Yes, it is," said Johnny, accepting the proffered salutation. "I don't know exactly how long, but ever so long."

"I am very glad to have the opportunity of shaking hands with you," said Crosbie; and then he retired, as it had become his duty to wait with his arm ready for Mrs. Dobbs Broughton. Having married an earl's daughter he was selected for that honour. There was a barrister in the room, and Mrs. Dobbs Broughton ought to have known better. As she professed to be guided in such matters by the rules laid down by the recognised authorities, she ought to have been aware that a man takes no rank from his wife. But she was entitled, I think, to merciful consideration for her error. A woman situated as was Mrs. Dobbs Broughton cannot altogether ignore these terrible rules. She cannot let her guests draw lots for precedence. She must select some one for the honour of her own arm. And amidst the intricacies of rank how is it possible for a woman to learn and to remember everything? If Providence would only send Mrs. Dobbs Broughton a Peer for every dinner-party, the thing would go more easily; but what woman will tell me, off-hand, which should go out of a room first, a C.B., an Admiral of the Blue, the dean of Barchester, or the dean of Arches? Who is to know who was everybody's father? How am I to remember that young Thompson's progenitor was made a baronet and not a knight when he was Lord Mayor? Perhaps Mrs. Dobbs Broughton ought to have known that Mr. Crosbie could have gained nothing by his wife's rank, and the barrister may be considered to have been not immoderately severe when he simply spoke of her afterwards as the silliest and most ignorant old woman he had ever met in his life. Eames with the lovely Miss Demolines on his arm was the last to move before the hostess. Mr.

Dobbs Broughton had led the way energetically with old Lady Demolines. There was no doubt about Lady Demolines,—as his wife had told him, because her title marked her. Her husband had been a physician in Paris, and had been knighted in consequence of some benefit supposed to have been done to some French scion of royalty,—when such scions in France were royal and not imperial. Lady Demolines' rank was not much, certainly; but it served to mark her, and was beneficial.

As he went downstairs Eames was still thinking of his meeting with Crosbie, and had as yet hardly said a word to his neighbour, and his neighbour had not said a word to him. Now Johnny understood dinners quite well enough to know that in a party of twelve, among whom six are ladies, everything depends on your next neighbour, and generally on the next neighbour who specially belongs to you; and as he took his seat he was a little alarmed as to his prospect for the next two hours. On his other hand sat Mrs. Ponsonby, the barrister's wife, and he did not much like the look of Mrs. Ponsonby. She was fat, heavy, and good-looking; with a broad space between her eyes, and light smooth hair;—a youthful British matron every inch of her, of whom any barrister with a young family of children might be proud. Now Miss Demolines, though she was hardly to be called beautiful, was at any rate remarkable. She had large, dark, well-shaped eyes, and very dark hair, which she wore tangled about in an extraordinary manner, and she had an expressive face,—a face made expressive by the owner's will. Such power of expression is often attained by dint of labour,—though it never reaches to the expression of

anything in particular. She was almost sufficiently good-looking to be justified in considering herself to be a beauty.

But Miss Demolines, though she had said nothing as yet, knew her game very well. A lady cannot begin conversation to any good purpose in the drawing-room, when she is seated and the man is standing;—nor can she know then how the table may subsequently arrange itself. Powder may be wasted, and often is wasted, and the spirit rebels against the necessity of commencing a second enterprise. But Miss Demolines, when she found herself seated, and perceived that on the other side of her was Mr. Ponsonby, a married man, commenced her enterprise at once, and our friend John Eames was immediately aware that he would have no difficulty as to conversation.

"Don't you like winter dinner-parties?" began Miss Demolines. This was said just as Johnny was taking his seat, and he had time to declare that he liked dinner-parties at all periods of the year if the dinner was good and the people pleasant before the host had muttered something which was intended to be understood to be a grace. "But I mean especially in winter," continued Miss Demolines. "I don't think daylight should ever be admitted at a dinner-table; and though you may shut out the daylight, you can't shut out the heat. And then there are always so many other things to go to in May and June and July. Dinners should be stopped by Act of Parliament for those three months. I don't care what people do afterwards, because we always fly away on the first of August."

"That is good-natured on your part."

"I 'm sure what I say would be for the good of

society;—but at this time of the year a dinner is warm and comfortable."

"Very comfortable, I think."

"And people get to know each other;"—in saying which Miss Demolines looked very pleasantly up into Johnny's face.

"There is a great deal in that," said he. "I wonder whether you and I will get to know each other?"

"Of course we shall;—that is, if I 'm worth knowing."

"There can be no doubt about that, I should say."

"Time alone can tell. But, Mr. Eames, I see that Mr. Crosbie is a friend of yours."

"Hardly a friend."

"I know very well that men are friends when they step up and shake hands with each other. It is the same as when women kiss."

"When I see women kiss, I always think that there is deep hatred at the bottom of it."

"And there may be deep hatred between you and Mr. Crosbie for anything I know to the contrary," said Miss Demolines.

"The very deepest," said Johnny, pretending to look grave.

"Ah, then I know he is your bosom friend, and that you will tell him anything I say! What a strange history that was of his marriage!"

"So I have heard;—but he is not quite bosom friend enough with me to have told me all the particulars. I know that his wife is dead."

"Dead; oh, yes; she has been dead these two years I should say."

"Not so long as that, I should think."

"Well,—perhaps not. But it 's ever so long ago; —quite long enough for him to be married again. Did you know her?"

"I never saw her in my life."

"I knew her,—not well indeed; but I am intimate with her sister, Lady Amelia Gagebee, and I have met her there. None of that family have married what you may call well. And now, Mr. Eames, pray look at the menu and tell me what I am to eat. Arrange for me a little dinner of my own, out of the great bill of fare provided. I always expect some gentleman to do that for me. Mr. Crosbie, you know, only lived with his wife for one month."

"So I 've been told."

"And a terrible month they had of it. I used to hear of it. He does n't look that sort of a man, does he?"

"Well;—no. I don't think he does. But what sort of man do you mean?"

"Why such a regular Bluebeard! Of course you know how he treated another girl before he married Lady Alexandrina. She died of it,—with a broken heart; absolutely died; and there he is, indifferent as possible;—and would treat me in the same way to-morrow if I would let him."

Johnny Eames, finding it impossible to talk to Miss Demolines about Lily Dale, took up the card of the dinner and went to work in earnest, recommending his neighbour what to eat and what to pass by. "But you 've skipped the pâté," she said, with energy.

"Allow me to ask you to choose mine for me instead. You are much more fit to do it." And she did choose his dinner for him.

They were sitting at a round table, and in order that the ladies and gentlemen should alternate themselves properly, Mr. Musselboro was opposite to the host. Next to him on his right was old Mrs. Van Siever, the widow of a Dutch merchant, who was very rich. She was a ghastly thing to look at, as well from the quantity as from the nature of the wiggeries which she wore. She had not only a false front, but long false curls, as to which it cannot be conceived that she would suppose that any one would be ignorant as to their falseness. She was very thin, too, and very small, and putting aside her wiggeries, you would think her to be all eyes. She was a ghastly old woman to the sight, and not altogether pleasant in her mode of talking. She seemed to know Mr. Musselboro very well, for she called him by his name without any prefix. He had, indeed, begun life as a clerk in her husband's office.

"Why does n't What's-his-name have real silver forks?" she said to him. Now Mrs. What's-his-name, —Mrs. Dobbs Broughton, we will call her—was sitting on the other side of Mr. Musselboro, between him and Mr. Crosbie; and, so placed, Mr. Musselboro found it rather hard to answer the question, more especially as he was probably aware that other questions would follow.

"What 's the use?" said Mr. Musselboro. "Everybody has these plated things now. What 's the use of a lot of capital lying dead?"

"Everybody does n't. I don't. You know as well as I do, Musselboro, that the appearance of the thing goes for a great deal. Capital is n't lying dead as long as people know that you 've got it."

Before answering this Mr. Musselboro was driven to

reflect that Mrs. Dobbs Broughton would probably hear his reply. "You won't find that there is any doubt on that head in the city as to Broughton," he said.

"I shan't ask in the city, and if I did, I should not believe what people told me. I think there are sillier folks in the city than anywhere else. What did he give for that picture upstairs which the young man painted?"

"What, Mrs. Dobbs Broughton's portrait?"

"You don't call that a portrait, do you? I mean the one with the three naked women?" Mr. Musselboro glanced round with one eye, and felt sure that Mrs. Dobbs Broughton had heard the question. But the old woman was determined to have an answer. "How much did he give for it, Musselboro?"

"Six hundred pounds, I believe," said Mr. Musselboro, looking straight before him as he answered, and pretending to treat the subject with perfect indifference.

"Did he indeed, now? Six hundred pounds! And yet he has n't got silver spoons. How things are changed! Tell me, Musselboro, who was that young man who came in with the painter?"

Mr. Musselboro turned round and asked Mrs. Broughton. "A Mr. John Eames, Mrs. Van Siever," said Mrs. Broughton, whispering across the front of Mr. Musselboro. "He is private secretary to Lord—Lord—Lord—I forget who. Some one of the ministers, I know. And he had a great fortune left him the other day by Lord—Lord—Lord—somebody else."

"All among the lords, I see," said Mrs. Van Siever. Then Mrs. Dobbs Broughton drew herself back, remembering some little attack which had been made on

her by Mrs. Van Siever when she herself had had the real lord to dine with her.

There was a Miss Van Siever there also, sitting between Crosbie and Conway Dalrymple. Conway Dalrymple had been specially brought there to sit next to Miss Van Siever. "There 's no knowing how much she 'll have," said Mrs. Dobbs Broughton, in the warmth of her friendship. "But it 's all real. It is, indeed. The mother is awfully rich."

"But she 's awful in another way, too," said Dalrymple.

"Indeed she is, Conway." Mrs. Dobbs Broughton had got into the way of calling her young friend by his Christian name. "All the world calls him Conway," she had said to her husband once when her husband caught her doing so. "She is awful. Her husband made the business in the city, when things were very different from what they are now, and I can't help having her. She has transactions of business with Dobbs. But there 's no mistake about the money."

"She need n't leave it to her daughter, I suppose?"

"But why should n't she? She has nobody else. You might offer to paint her, you know. She 'd make an excellent picture. So much character. You come and see her."

Conway Dalrymple had expressed his willingness to meet Miss Van Siever, saying something, however, as to his present position being one which did not admit of any matrimonial speculation. Then Mrs. Dobbs Broughton had told him, with much seriousness, that he was altogether wrong, and that were he to forget himself, or commit himself, or misbehave himself, there must be an end to their pleasant intimacy. In answer

to which, Mr. Dalrymple had said that her Grace was surely of all Graces the least gracious. And now he had come to meet Miss Van Siever, and was seated next to her at table.

Miss Van Siever, who at this time had perhaps reached her twenty-fifth year, was certainly a handsome young woman. She was fair and large, bearing no likeness whatever to her mother. Her features were regular, and her full, clear eyes had a brilliance of their own, looking at you always steadfastly and boldly, though very seldom pleasantly. Her mouth would have been beautiful had it not been too strong for feminine beauty. Her teeth were perfect,—too perfect,—looking like miniature walls of carved ivory. She knew the fault of this perfection and showed her teeth as little as she could. Her nose and chin were finely chiselled, and her head stood well upon her shoulders. But there was something hard about it all which repelled you. Dalrymple, when he saw her, recoiled from her, not outwardly, but inwardly. Yes, she was handsome, as may be a horse or a tiger; but there was about her nothing of feminine softness. He could not bring himself to think of taking Clara Van Siever as the model that was to sit before him for the rest of his life. He certainly could make a picture of her, as had been suggested by his friend, Mrs. Broughton, but it must be as Judith with the dissevered head, or as Jael using her hammer over the temple of Sisera. Yes,—he thought she would do as Jael; and if Mrs. Van Siever would throw him a sugar-plum, for he would want the sugar-plum, seeing that any other result was out of the question,—the thing might be done. Such was the idea of Mr. Conway Dalrymple respect-

ing Miss Van Siever,—before he led her down to dinner.

At first he found it hard to talk to her. She answered him, and not with monosyllables. But she answered him without sympathy, or apparent pleasure in talking. Now the young artist was in the habit of being flattered by ladies, and expected to have his small talk made very easy for him. He liked to give himself little airs, and was not generally disposed to labour very hard at the task of making himself agreeable.

"Were you ever painted yet?" he asked her after they had both been sitting silent for two or three minutes.

"Was I ever—ever painted? In what way?"

"I don't mean rouged, or enamelled, or got up by Madame Rachel; but have you ever had your portrait taken?"

"I have been photographed,—of course."

"That 's why I asked you if you had been painted, —so as to make some little distinction between the two. I am a painter by profession, and do portraits."

"So Mrs. Broughton told me."

"I am not asking for a job, you know."

"I am quite sure of that."

"But I should have thought you would have been sure to have sat to somebody."

"I never did. I never thought of doing so. One does those things at the instigation of one's intimate friends,—fathers, mothers, uncles, and aunts, and the like."

"Or husbands, perhaps,—or lovers?"

"Well, yes; my intimate friend is my mother, and she would never dream of such a thing. She hates pictures."

"Hates pictures!"

"And especially portraits. And I 'm afraid, Mr. Dalrymple, she hates artists."

"Good heavens; how cruel! I suppose there is some story attached to it. There has been some fatal likeness,—some terrible picture,—something in her early days?"

"Nothing of the kind, Mr. Dalrymple. It is merely the fact that her sympathies are with ugly things, rather than with pretty things. I think she loves the mahogany dinner-table better than anything else in the house; and she likes to have everything dark, and plain, and solid."

"And good?"

"Good of its kind, certainly."

"If everybody was like your mother, how would the artists live?"

"There would be none."

"And the world, you think, would be none the poorer?"

"I did not speak of myself. I think the world would be very much the poorer. I am very fond of the ancient masters, though I do not suppose that I understand them."

"They are easier understood than the modern, I can tell you. Perhaps you don't care for modern pictures?"

"Not in comparison, certainly. If that is uncivil, you have brought it on yourself. But I do not in truth mean anything derogatory to the painters of the day. When their pictures are old, they,—that is the good ones among them,—will be nice also."

"Pictures are like wine, and want age, you think."

"Yes, and statues too, and buildings above all things. The colours of new paintings are so glaring, and the faces are so bright and self-conscious, that they look to me when I go to the exhibition like coloured prints in a child's new picture-book. It is the same thing with buildings. One sees all the points, and nothing is left to the imagination."

"I find I have come across a real critic."

"I hope, at any rate, I am not a sham one;" and Miss Van Siever as she said this looked very savage.

"I should n't take you to be a sham in anything."

"Ah, that would be saying a great deal for myself. Who can undertake to say that he is not a sham in anything?"

As she said this the ladies were getting up. So Miss Van Siever also got up, and left Mr. Conway Dalrymple to consider whether he could say or could think of himself that he was not a sham in anything. As regarded Miss Clara Van Siever, he began to think that he should not object to paint her portrait, even though there might be no sugar-plum. He would certainly do it as Jael; and he would, if he dared, insert dimly in the background some idea of the face of the mother, half-appearing, half-vanishing, as the spirit of the sacrifice. He was composing his picture while Mr. Dobbs Broughton was arranging himself and his bottles.

"Musselboro," he said, "I 'll come up between you and Crosbie. Mr. Eames, though I run away from you, the claret shall remain; or, rather, it shall flow backwards and forwards as rapidly as you will."

"I 'll keep it moving," said Johnny.

"Do; there 's a good fellow. It 's a nice glass of

wine, is n't it? Old Ramsby, who keeps as good a stock of stuff as any wine merchant in London, gave me a hint, three or four years ago, that he 'd a lot of tidy Bordeaux. It 's '47, you know. He had ninety dozen, and I took it all."

"What was the figure, Broughton?" said Crosbie, asking the question which he knew was expected.

"Well, I only gave one hundred and four for it then; it 's worth a hundred and twenty now. I would n't sell a bottle of it for any money. Come, Dalrymple, pass it round; but fill your glass first."

"Thank you, no; I don't like it. I 'll drink sherry."

"Don't like it!" said Dobbs Broughton.

"It 's strange, is n't it? but I don't."

"I thought you particularly told me to drink his claret?" said Johnny to his friend afterwards.

"So I did," said Conway; "and wonderfully good wine it is. But I make it a rule never to eat or drink anything in a man's house when he praises it himself and tells me the price of it."

"And I make it a rule never to cut the nose off my own face," said Johnny.

Before they went Johnny Eames had been specially invited to call on Lady Demolines, and had said that he would do so. "We live in Porchester Gardens," said Miss Demolines. "Upon my word, I believe that the farther London stretches in that direction, the farther mamma will go. She thinks the air so much better. I know it 's a long way."

"Distance is nothing to me," said Johnny; "I can always set off over-night."

Conway Dalrymple did not get invited to call on Mrs. Van Siever, but before he left the house he did

say a word or two more to his friend Mrs. Broughton as to Clara Van Siever. "She is a fine young woman," he said; "she is indeed."

"You have found it out, have you?"

"Yes, I have found it out. I do not doubt that some day she 'll murder her husband or her mother, or startle the world by some newly-invented crime; but that only makes her the more interesting."

"And when you add to that all the old woman's money," said Mrs. Dobbs Broughton, "you think that she might do?"

"For a picture, certainly. I 'm speaking of her simply as a model. Could we not manage it? Get her once here without her mother knowing it, or Broughton, or any one. I 've got the subject,—Jael and Sisera, you know. I should like to put Musselboro in as Sisera, with the nail half driven in." Mrs. Dobbs Broughton declared that the scheme was a great deal too wicked for her participation, but at last she promised to think of it.

"You might as well come up and have a cigar," Dalrymple said, as he and his friend left Mr. Broughton's house. Johnny said that he would go up and have a cigar or two. "And now tell me what you think of Mrs. Dobbs Broughton and her set," said Conway.

"Well, I 'll tell you what I think of them. I think they stink of money, as the people say; but I 'm not sure that they have got any all the same."

"I should suppose he makes a large income."

"Very likely, and perhaps spends more than he makes. A good deal of it looked to me like make-believe. There 's no doubt about the claret, but the

champagne was execrable. A man is a criminal to have such stuff handed round to his guests. And there is n't the ring of real gold about the house."

"I hate the ring of the gold, as you call it," said the artist.

"So do I,—I hate it like poison; but if it is there, I like it to be true. There is a sort of persons going now,—and one meets them out, here and there, every day of one's life,—who are downright Brummagem to the ear and to the touch and to the sight, and we recognise them as such at the very first moment. My honoured lord and master, Sir Raffle, is one such. There is no mistaking him. Clap him down upon the counter, and he rings dull and untrue at once. Pardon me, my dear Conway, if I say the same of your excellent friend Mr. Dobbs Broughton."

"I think you go a little too far, but I don't deny it. What you mean is, that he 's not a gentleman."

"I mean a great deal more than that. Bless you, when you come to talk of a gentleman, who is to define the word? How do I know whether or no I 'm a gentleman myself? When I used to be in Burton Crescent, I was hardly a gentleman then, sitting at the same table with Mrs. Roper and the Lupexes;—do you remember them,—and the lovely Amelia?"

"I suppose you were a gentleman, then, as well as now."

"You, if you had been painting duchesses then, with a studio in Kensington Gardens, would not have said so, if you had happened to come across me. I can't define a gentleman, even in my own mind;—but I can define the sort of man with whom I think I can live pleasantly."

"And poor Dobbs does n't come within the line?"

"N—o, not quite; a very nice fellow, I 'm quite sure, and I am very much obliged to you for taking me there."

"I never will take you to any house again. And what did you think of his wife?"

"That 's a horse of another colour altogether. A pretty woman with such a figure as hers has got a right to be anything she pleases. I see you are a great favourite."

"No, I 'm not;—not especially. I do like her. She wants to make up a match between me and that Miss Van Siever. Miss Van is to have gold by the ingot, and jewels by the bushel, and a hatful of bank shares, and a whole mine in Cornwall, for her fortune."

"And is very handsome into the bargain."

"Yes; she 's handsome."

"So is her mother," said Johnny. "If you take the daughter, I 'll take the mother, and see if I can't do you out of a mine or two. Good-night, old fellow. I 'm only joking about old Dobbs. I 'll go and dine there again to-morrow, if you like it."

CHAPTER XXV.

MISS MADALINA DEMOLINES.

"I DON'T think you care two straws about her," Conway Dalrymple said to his friend John Eames, two days after the dinner-party at Mrs. Dobbs Broughton's. The painter was at work in his studio, and the private secretary from the Income-tax Office, who was no doubt engaged on some special mission to the West End on the part of Sir Raffle Buffle, was sitting in a lounging-chair and smoking a cigar.

"Because I don't go about with my stockings cross-gartered, and do that kind of business?"

"Well, yes; because you don't do that kind of business, more or less."

"It is n't in my line, my dear fellow. I know what you mean, very well. I dare say, artistically speaking,——"

"Don't be an ass, Johnny."

"Well then, poetically, or romantically, if you like that better,—I dare say that poetically or romantically I am deficient. I eat my dinner very well, and I don't suppose I ought to do that; and, if you 'll believe me, I find myself laughing sometimes."

"I never knew a man who laughed so much. You 're always laughing."

"And that, you think, is a bad sign?"

"I don't believe you really care about her. I think you are aware that you have got a love-affair on hand, and that you hang on to it rather persistently, having in some way come to a resolution that you would be persistent. But there is n't much heart in it. I dare say there was once."

"And that is your opinion?"

"You are just like some of those men who for years past have been going to write a book on some new subject. The intention has been sincere at first, and it never altogether dies away. But the would-be author, though he still talks of his work, knows that it will never be executed, and is very patient under the disappointment. All enthusiasm about the thing is gone, but he is still known as the man who is going to do it some day. You are the man who means to marry Miss Dale in five, ten, or twenty years' time."

"Now, Conway, all that is thoroughly unfair. The would-be author talks of his would-be book to everybody. I have never talked of Miss Dale to any one but you, and one or two very old family friends. And from year to year, and from month to month, I have done all that has been in my power to win her. I don't think I shall ever succeed, and yet I am as determined about it as I was when I first began it,—or rather much more so. If I do not marry Lily, I shall never marry at all, and if anybody were to tell me to-morrow that she had made up her mind to have me, I should well-nigh go mad for joy. But I am not going to give up all my life for love. Indeed, the less I can bring myself to give up for it, the better I shall think of myself. Now I 'll go away and call on old Lady Demolines.".

"And flirt with her daughter."

"Yes;—flirt with her daughter, if I get the opportunity. Why should n't I flirt with her daughter?"

"Why not, if you like it?"

"I don't like it,—not particularly, that is; because the young lady is not very pretty, nor yet very graceful, nor yet very wise."

"She is pretty after a fashion," said the artist, "and if not wise, she is at any rate clever."

"Nevertheless, I do not like her," said John Eames.

"Then why do you go there?"

"One has to be civil to people though they are neither pretty nor wise. I don't mean to insinuate that Miss Demolines is particularly bad, or indeed that she is worse than young ladies in general. I only abused her because there was an insinuation in what you said, that I was going to amuse myself with Miss Demolines in the absence of Miss Dale. The one thing has nothing to do with the other thing. Nothing that I shall say to Miss Demolines will at all militate against my loyalty to Lily."

"All right, old fellow;—I did n't mean to put you on your purgation. I want you to look at that sketch. Do you know for whom it is intended?" Johnny took up a scrap of paper, and having scrutinised it for a minute or two declared that he had not the slightest idea who was represented. "You know the subject,—the story that is intended to be told?" said Dalrymple.

"Upon my word, I don't. There 's some old fellow seems to be catching it over the head; but it 's all so confused I can't make much of it. The woman seems to be uncommon angry."

"Do you ever read your Bible?"

"Ah, dear! not as often as I ought to do. Ah, I see; it 's Sisera! I never could quite believe that story. Jael might have killed Captain Sisera in his sleep,—for which, by-the-bye, she ought to have been hung, and she might possibly have done it with a hammer and a nail. But she could not have driven it through, and staked him to the ground."

"I 've warrant enough for putting it into a picture, at any rate. My Jael there is intended for Miss Van Siever."

"Miss Van Siever! Well, it is like her. Has she sat for it?"

"Oh, dear, no; not yet. I mean to get her to do so. There 's a strength about her which would make her sit the part admirably. And I fancy she would like to be driving a nail into a fellow's head. I think I shall take Musselboro for a Sisera."

"You 're not in earnest?"

"He would just do for it. But of course I shan't ask him to sit, as my Jael would not like it. She would not consent to operate on so base a subject. So you really are going down to Guestwick?"

"Yes; I start to-morrow. Good-bye, old fellow. I 'll come and sit for Sisera if you 'll let me;—only Miss Van Jael shall have a blunted nail, if you please."

Then Johnny left the artist's room and walked across from Kensington to Lady Demolines' house. As he went he partly accused himself, and partly excused himself, in that matter of his love for Lily Dale. There were moments of his life in which he felt that he would willingly die for her,—that life was not worth having without her,—in which he went about inwardly reproaching fortune for having treated him so cruelly.

Why should she not be his? He half believed that she loved him. She had almost told him so. She could not surely still love that other man who had treated her with such vile falsehood? As he considered the question in all its bearings he assured himself over and over again that there would be now no fear of that rival;—and yet he had such fears, and hated Crosbie almost as much as ever. It was a thousand pities, certainly, that the man should have been made free by the death of his wife. But it could hardly be that he should seek Lily again, or that Lily, if so sought, should even listen to him. But yet there he was, free once more,—an odious being, whom Johnny was determined to sacrifice to his vengeance, if cause for such sacrifice should occur. And thus thinking of the real truth of his love, he endeavoured to excuse himself to himself from that charge of vagueness and laxness which his friend Conway Dalrymple had brought against him. And then again he accused himself of the same sin. If he had been positively in earnest, with downright manly earnestness, would he have allowed the thing to drag itself on with a weak uncertain life, as it had done for the last two or three years? Lily Dale had been a dream to him in his boyhood; and he had made a reality of his dream as soon as he had become a man. But before he had been able, as a man, to tell his love to the girl whom he had loved as a child, another man had intervened, and his prize had been taken from him. Then the wretched victor had thrown his treasure away, and he, John Eames, had been content to stoop to pick it up,—was content to do so now. But there was something which he felt to be unmanly in the constant stooping. Dalrymple

had told him that he was like a man who is ever writing a book and yet never writes it. He would make another attempt to get his book written,—an attempt into which he would throw all his strength and all his heart. He would do his very best to make Lily his own. But if he failed now, he would have done with it. It seemed to him to be below his dignity as a man to be always coveting a thing which he could not obtain.

Johnny was informed by the boy in buttons, who opened the door for him at Lady Demolines', that the ladies were at home, and he was shown up into the drawing-room. Here he was allowed full ten minutes to explore the knicknacks on the table, and open the photograph book, and examine the furniture, before Miss Demolines made her appearance. When she did come, her hair was tangled more marvellously even than when he saw her at the dinner-party, and her eyes were darker, and her cheeks thinner. "I 'm afraid mamma won't be able to come down," said Miss Demolines. "She will be so sorry; but she is not quite well to-day. The wind is in the east, she says, and when she says the wind is in the east she always refuses to be well."

"Then I should tell her it was in the west."

"But it is in the east."

"Ah, there I can't help you, Miss Demolines. I never know which is east, and which west; and if I did, I should n't know from which point the wind blew."

"At any rate mamma can't come downstairs, and you must excuse her. What a very nice woman Mrs. Dobbs Broughton is." Johnny acknowledged that

Mrs. Dobbs Broughton was charming. "And Mr. Broughton is so good-natured!" Johnny again assented. "I like him of all things," said Miss Demolines. "So do I," said Johnny;—"I never liked anybody so much in my life. I suppose one is bound to say that kind of thing." "Oh, you ill-natured man," said Miss Demolines. "I suppose you think that poor Mr. Broughton is a little—just a little,—you know what I mean."

"Not exactly," said Johnny.

"Yes, you do; you know very well what I mean. And of course he is. How can he help it?"

"Poor fellow,—no. I don't suppose he can help it, or he would;—would n't he?"

"Of course Mr. Broughton had not the advantage of birth or much early education. All his friends know that, and make allowance accordingly. When she married him, she was aware of his deficiency, and made up her mind to put up with it."

"It was very kind of her; don't you think so?"

"I knew Maria Clutterbuck for years before she was married. Of course she was very much my senior, but, nevertheless, we were friends. I think I was hardly more than twelve years old when I first began to correspond with Maria. She was then past twenty. So you see, Mr. Eames, I make no secret of my age."

"Why should you?"

"But never mind that. Everybody knows that Maria Clutterbuck was very much admired. Of course I 'm not going to tell you or any other gentleman all her history."

"I was in hopes you were."

"Then certainly your hopes will be frustrated, Mr.

Eames. But undoubtedly when she told us that she was going to take Dobbs Broughton, we were a little disappointed. Maria Clutterbuck had been used to a better kind of life. You understand what I mean, Mr. Eames?"

"Oh, exactly;—and yet it 's not a bad kind of life, either."

"No, no; that is true. It has its attractions. She keeps her carriage, sees a good deal of company, has an excellent house, and goes abroad for six weeks every year. But you know, Mr. Eames, there is, perhaps, a little uncertainty about it."

"Life is always uncertain, Miss Demolines."

"You 're quizzing now, I know. But don't you feel now, really, that city money is always very chancy? It comes and goes so quick."

"As regards the going, I think that 's the same with all money," said Johnny.

"Not with land, or the funds. Mamma has every shilling laid out in a first-class mortgage on land at four per cent. That does make one feel so secure! The land can't run away."

"But you think poor Broughton's money may?"

"It 's all speculation, you know. I don't believe she minds it; I don't, indeed. She lives that kind of fevered life now that she likes excitement. Of course we all know that Mr. Dobbs Broughton is not what we can call an educated gentleman. His manners are against him, and he is very ignorant. Even dear Maria would admit that."

"One would perhaps let that pass without asking her opinion at all."

"She has acknowledged it to me, twenty times.

But he is very good-natured, and lets her do pretty nearly anything that she likes. I only hope she won't trespass on his good-nature. I do, indeed."

"You mean, spend too much money?"

"No; I did n't mean that exactly. Of course she ought to be moderate, and I hope she is. To that kind of fevered existence profuse expenditure is perhaps necessary. But I was thinking of something else. I fear she is a little giddy."

"Dear me! I should have thought she was too—too—too——"

"You mean too old for anything of that kind. Maria Broughton must be thirty-three if she 's a day."

"That would make you just twenty-five," said Johnny, feeling perfectly sure as he said so that the lady whom he was addressing was at any rate past thirty!

"Never mind my age, Mr. Eames; whether I am twenty-five, or a hundred-and-five, has nothing to do with poor Maria Clutterbuck. But now I 'll tell you why I mention all this to you. You must have seen how foolish she is about your friend Mr. Dalrymple?"

"Upon my word, I have n't."

"Nonsense, Mr. Eames; you have. If she were your wife, would you like her to call a man Conway? Of course you would not. I don't mean to say that there 's anything in it. I know Maria's principles too well to suspect that. It 's merely because she 's flighty and fevered."

"That fevered existence accounts for it all," said Johnny.

"No doubt it does," said Miss Demolines, with a

nod of her head, which was intended to show that she was willing to give her friend the full benefit of any excuse which could be offered for her. "But don't you think you could do something, Mr. Eames?"

"I do something?"

"Yes, you. You and Mr. Dalrymple are such friends! If you were just to point out to him, you know——"

"Point out what? Tell him that he ought n't to be called Conway? Because, after all, I suppose that 's the worst of it. If you mean to say that Dalrymple is in love with Mrs. Broughton, you never made a greater mistake in your life."

"Oh, no; not in love. That would be terrible, you know." And Miss Demolines shook her head sadly. "But there may be so much mischief done without anything of that kind! Thoughtlessness, you know, Mr. Eames,—pure thoughtlessness! Think of what I have said, and if you can speak a word to your friend, do. And now I want to ask you something else. I 'm so glad you 're come, because circumstances have seemed to make it necessary that you and I should know each other. We may be of so much use if we put our heads together." Johnny bowed when he heard this, but made no immediate reply. "Have you heard anything about a certain picture that is being planned?" Johnny did not wish to answer this question, but Miss Demolines paused so long, and looked so earnestly into his face, that he found himself forced to say something.

"What picture?"

"A certain picture that is—or, perhaps, that is not to be, painted by Mr. Dalrymple?"

"I hear so much about Dalrymple's pictures! You don't mean the portrait of Lady Glencora Palliser? That is nearly finished, and will be in the Exhibition this year."

"I don't mean that at all. I mean a picture that has not yet been begun."

"A portrait, I suppose?"

"As to that I cannot quite say. It is at any rate to be a likeness. I am sure you have heard of it. Come, Mr. Eames; it would be better that we should be candid with each other. You remember Miss Van Siever, of course?"

"I remember that she dined at the Broughtons'."

"And you have heard of Jael, I suppose, and Sisera?"

"Yes, in a general way,—in the Bible."

"And now will you tell me whether you have not heard the names of Jael and Miss Van Siever coupled together? I see you know all about it."

"I have heard of it, certainly."

"Of course you have. So have I, as you perceive. Now, Mr. Eames,"—and Miss Demolines' voice became tremulously eager as she addressed him,—"it is your duty, and it is my duty, to take care that that picture shall never be painted."

"But why should it not be painted?"

"You don't know Miss Van Siever, yet?"

"Not in the least."

"Nor Mrs. Van Siever?"

"I never spoke a word to her."

"I do. I know them both,—well." There was something almost grandly tragic in Miss Demolines' voice as she thus spoke. "Yes, Mr. Eames, I know

them well. If that scheme be continued, it will work terrible mischief. You and I must prevent it."

"But I don't see what harm it will do."

"Think of Conway Dalrymple passing so many hours in Maria's sitting-room upstairs! The picture is to be painted there, you know."

"But Miss Van Siever will be present. Won't that make it all right? What is there wrong about Miss Van Siever?"

"I won't deny that Clara Van Siever has a certain beauty of her own. To me she is certainly the most unattractive woman that I ever came near. She is simply repulsive!" Hereupon Miss Demolines held up her hand as though she were banishing Miss Van Siever for ever from her sight, and shuddered slightly. "Men think her handsome, and she is handsome. But she is false, covetous, malicious, cruel, and dishonest."

"What a fiend in petticoats!"

"You may say that, Mr. Eames. And then her mother! Her mother is not so bad. Her mother is very different. But the mother is an odious woman, too. It was an evil day for Maria Clutterbuck when she first saw either the mother or the daughter. I tell you that in confidence."

"But what can I do?" said Johnny, who began to be startled and almost interested by the eagerness of the woman.

"I 'll tell you what you can do. Don't let your friend go to Mr. Broughton's house to paint the picture. If he does do it, there will mischief come of it. Of course you can prevent him."

"I should not think of trying to prevent him unless I knew why."

"She is a nasty proud minx, and it would set her up ever so high,—to think that she was being painted by Mr. Dalrymple! But that is n't the reason. Maria would get into terrible trouble about it, and there would be no end of mischief. I must not tell you more now, and if you do not believe me, I cannot help it. Surely, Mr. Eames, my word may be taken as going for something? And when I ask you to help me in this, I do expect that you will not refuse me." By this time Miss Demolines was sitting close to him, and had more than once put her hand upon his arm in the energy of her eloquence. Then as he remembered that he had never seen Miss Demolines till the other day, or Miss Van Siever, or even Mrs. Dobbs Broughton, he bethought himself that it was all very droll. Nevertheless he had no objection to Miss Demolines putting her hand upon his arm.

"I never like to interfere in anything that does not seem to be my own business," said Johnny.

"Is not your friend's business your own business? What does friendship mean if it is not so? And when I tell you that it is my business, mine of right, does that go for nothing with you? I thought I might depend upon you, Mr. Eames; I did indeed." Then again she put her hand upon his arm, and as he looked into her eyes he began to think that after all she was good-looking in a certain way. At any rate she had fine eyes, and there was something picturesque about the entanglement of her hair. "Think of it, and then come back and talk to me again," said Miss Demolines.

"But I am going out of town to-morrow."

"For how long?"

"For ten days."

"Nothing can be done during that time. Clara Van Siever is going away in a day, and will not be back for three weeks. I happen to know that; so we have plenty of time for working. It would be very desirable that she should never even hear of it; but that cannot be hoped, as Maria has such a tongue! Could n't you see Mr. Dalrymple to-night?"

"Well, no; I don't think I could."

"Mind, at least, that you come to me as soon as ever you return."

Before he got out of the house, which he did after a most affectionate farewell, Johnny felt himself compelled to promise that he would come to Miss Demolines again as soon as he got back to town; and as the door was closed behind him by the boy in buttons, he made up his mind that he certainly would call as soon as he returned to London. "It 's as good as a play," he said to himself. Not that he cared in the least for Miss Demolines, or that he would take any steps with the intention of preventing the painting of the picture. Miss Demolines had some battle to fight, and he would leave her to fight it with her own weapons. If his friend chose to paint a picture of Jael, and take Miss Van Siever as a model, it was no business of his. Nevertheless he would certainly go and see Miss Demolines again, because, as he said, she was as good as a play.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE PICTURE.

On that same afternoon Conway Dalrymple rolled up his sketch of Jael and Sisera, put it into his pocket, dressed himself with some considerable care, putting on a velvet coat which he was in the habit of wearing out-of-doors when he did not intend to wander beyond Kensington Gardens and the neighbourhood, and which was supposed to become him well, yellow gloves, and a certain Spanish hat of which he was fond, and slowly sauntered across to the house of his friend Mrs. Dobbs Broughton. When the door was opened to him he did not ask if the lady were at home, but muttering some word to the servant, made his way through the hall, upstairs, to a certain small sitting-room looking to the north, which was much used by the mistress of the house. It was quite clear that Conway Dalrymple had arranged his visit beforehand, and that he was expected. He opened the door without knocking, and, though the servant had followed him, he entered without being announced. "I 'm afraid I 'm late," he said, as he gave his hand to Mrs. Broughton; "but for the life of me I could not get away sooner."

"You are quite in time," said the lady, "for any good that you are likely to do."

"What does this mean?"

"It means this, my friend, that you had better give the idea up. I have been thinking of it all day, and I do not approve of it."

"What nonsense!"

"Of course you will say so, Conway. I have observed of late that whatever I say to you is called nonsense. I suppose it is the new fashion that gentlemen should so express themselves, but I am not quite sure that I like it."

"You know what I mean. I am very anxious about this picture, and I shall be much disappointed if it cannot be done now. It was you put it into my head first."

"I regret it very much, I can assure you; but it will not be generous in you to urge that against me."

"But why should n't it succeed?"

"There are many reasons,—some personal to myself."

"I do not know what they can be. You hinted at something which I only took as having been said in joke."

"If you mean about Miss Van Siever and yourself, I was quite in earnest, Conway. I do not think you could do better, and I should be glad to see it of all things. Nothing would please me more than to bring Miss Van Siever and you together."

"And nothing would please me less."

"But why so?"

"Because,—because—— I can do nothing but tell you the truth, carina; because my heart is not free to present itself at Miss Van Siever's feet."

"It ought to be free, Conway, and you must make

it free. It will be well that you should be married, and well for others besides yourself. I tell you so as your friend, and you have no truer friend. Sit where you are, if you please. You can say anything you have to say without stalking about the room."

"I was not going to stalk,—as you call it."

"You will be safer and quieter while you are sitting. I heard a knock at the door, and I do not doubt that it is Clara. She said she would be here."

"And you have told her of the picture?"

"Yes; I have told her. She said that it would be impossible, and that her mother would not allow it. Here she is." Then Miss Van Siever was shown into the room, and Dalrymple perceived that she was a girl the peculiarity of whose complexion bore daylight better even than candlelight. There was something in her countenance which seemed to declare that she could bear any light to which it might be subjected without flinching from it. And her bonnet, which was very plain, and her simple brown morning gown, suited her well. She was one who required none of the circumstances of studied dress to carry off aught in her own appearance. She could look her best when other women look their worst, and could dare to be seen at all times. Dalrymple, with an artist's eye, saw this at once, and immediately confessed to himself that there was something great about her. He could not deny her beauty. But there was ever present to him that look of hardness which had struck him when he first saw her. He could not but fancy that though at times she might be playful, and allow the fur of her coat to be stroked with good-humour,—she would be a dangerous plaything, using her claws unpleasantly

when the good-humour should have passed away. But not the less was she beautiful, and,—beyond that and better than that, for his purpose,—she was picturesque.

"Clara," said Mrs. Broughton, "here is this mad painter, and he says that he will have you on his canvas, either with your will or without it."

"Even if he could do that, I am sure he would not," said Miss Van Siever.

"To prove to you that I can, I think I need only show you the sketch," said Dalrymple, taking the drawing out of his pocket. "As regards the face, I know it so well by heart already, that I feel certain I could produce a likeness without even a sitting. What do you think of it, Mrs. Broughton?"

"It is clever," said she, looking at it with all that enthusiasm which women are able to throw into their eyes on such occasions; "very clever. The subject would just suit her. I have never doubted that."

"Eames says that it is confused," said the artist.

"I don't see that at all," said Mrs. Broughton.

"Of course a sketch must be rough. This one has been rubbed about and altered—but I think there is something in it."

"An immense deal," said Mrs. Broughton. "Don't you think so, Clara?"

"I am not a judge."

"But you can see the woman's fixed purpose; and her stealthiness as well;—and the man sleeps like a log. What is that dim outline?"

"Nothing in particular," said Dalrymple. But the dim outline was intended to represent Mrs. Van Siever.

"It is very good,—unquestionably good," said Mrs.

Dobbs Broughton. "I do not for a moment doubt that you would make a great picture of it. It is just the subject for you, Conway; so much imagination, and yet such a scope for portraiture. It would be full of action, and yet such perfect repose. And the lights and shadows would be exactly in your line. I can see at a glance how you would manage the light in the tent, and bring it down just on the nail. And then the *pose* of the woman would be so good, so much strength, and yet such grace! You should have the bowl he drank the milk out of, so as to tell the whole story. No painter living tells a story so well as you do, Conway." Conway Dalrymple knew that the woman was talking nonsense to him, and yet he liked it, and liked her for talking it.

"But Mr. Dalrymple can paint his Sisera without making me a Jael," said Miss Van Siever.

"Of course he can," said Mrs. Broughton.

"But I never will," said the artist. "I conceived the subject as connected with you, and I will never disjoin the two ideas."

"I think it no compliment, I can assure you," said Miss Van Siever.

"And none was intended. But you may observe that artists in all ages have sought for higher types of models in painting women who have been violent or criminal, than have sufficed for them in their portraitures of gentleness and virtue. Look at all the Judiths, and the Lucretias, and the Charlotte Cordays; how much finer the women are than the Madonnas and the Saint Cecilias."

"After that, Clara, you need not scruple to be a Jael," said Mrs. Broughton.

"But I do scruple,—very much; so strongly that I know I never shall do it. In the first place I don't know why Mr. Dalrymple wants it."

"Want it!" said Conway. "I want to paint a striking picture."

"But you can do that without putting me into it."

"No;—not this picture. And why should you object? It is the commonest thing in the world for ladies to sit to artists in that manner."

"People would know it."

"Nobody would know it, so that you need care about it. What would it matter if everybody knew it? We are not proposing anything improper;—are we, Mrs. Broughton?"

"She shall not be pressed if she does not like it," said Mrs. Broughton. "You know I told you before Clara came in that I was afraid it could not be done."

"And I don't like it," said Miss Van Siever, with some little hesitation in her voice.

"I don't see anything improper in it, if you mean that," said Mrs. Broughton.

"But mamma!"

"Well, yes; that is the difficulty, no doubt. The only question is, whether your mother is not so very singular as to make it impossible that you should comply with her in everything."

"I am afraid that I do not comply with her in very much," said Miss Van Siever, in her gentlest voice.

"Oh, Clara!"

"You drive me to say so, as otherwise I should be a hypocrite. Of course I ought not to have said it before Mr. Dalrymple."

"You and Mr. Dalrymple will understand all about

that, I dare say, before the picture is finished," said Mrs. Broughton.

It did not take much persuasion on the part of Conway Dalrymple to get the consent of the younger lady to be painted, or of the elder to allow the sitting to go on in her room. When the question of easels and other apparatus came to be considered Mrs. Broughton was rather flustered, and again declared with energy that the whole thing must fall to the ground; but a few more words from the painter restored her, and at last the arrangements were made. As Mrs. Dobbs Broughton's dear friend, Madalina Demolines, had said, Mrs. Dobbs Broughton liked a fevered existence. "What will Dobbs say?" she exclaimed more than once. And it was decided that Dobbs at last should know nothing about it as long as it could be kept from him. "Of course he shall be told at last," said his wife. "I would n't keep anything from the dear fellow for all the world. But if he knew it at first it would be sure to get through Musselboro to your mother."

"I certainly shall beg that Mr. Broughton may not be taken into confidence if Mr. Musselboro is to follow," said Clara. "And it must be understood that I must cease to sit immediately, whatever may be the inconvenience, should mamma speak to me about it."

This stipulation was made and conceded, and then Miss Van Siever went away, leaving the artist with Mrs. Dobbs Broughton. "And now, if you please, Conway, you had better go too," said the lady, as soon as there had been time for Miss Van Siever to get downstairs and out of the hall-door.

"Of course you are in a hurry to get rid of me."

"Yes, I am."

"A little while ago I improperly said that some suggestion of yours was nonsense, and you rebuked me for my blunt incivility. Might not I rebuke you now with equal justice?"

"Do so, if you will;—but leave me. I tell you, Conway, that in these matters you must either be guided by me, or you and I must cease to see each other. It does not do that you should remain here with me longer than the time usually allowed for a morning call. Clara has come and gone, and you also must go. I am sorry to disturb you, for you seem to be so very comfortable in that chair,"

"I am comfortable,—and I can look at you. Come;—there can be no harm in saying that, if I say nothing else. Well;—there, now I am gone." Whereupon he got up from his arm-chair.

"But you are not gone while you stand there."

"And you would really wish me to marry that girl?"

"I do,—if you can love her."

"And what about her love?"

"You must win it, of course. She is to be won, like any other woman. The fruit won't fall into your mouth merely because you open your lips. You must climb the tree."

"Still climbing trees in the Hesperides," said Conway. "Love does that, you know; but it is hard to climb the trees without the love. It seems to me that I have done my climbing,—have clomb as high as I knew how, and that the boughs are breaking with me, and that I am likely to get a fall. Do you understand me?"

"I would rather not understand you."

"That is no answer to my question. Do you understand that at this moment I am getting a fall which will break every bone in my skin and put any other climbing out of the question as far as I am concerned? Do you understand that?"

"No; I do not," said Mrs. Broughton in a tremulous voice.

"Then I 'll go and make love at once to Clara Van Siever. There 's enough of pluck left in me to ask her to marry me, and I suppose I could manage to go through the ceremony if she accepted me."

"But I want you to love her," said Mrs. Dobbs Broughton.

"I dare say I should love her well enough after a bit;—that is, if she did n't break my head or comb my hair. I suppose there will be no objection to my saying that you sent me when I ask her?"

"Conway, you will of course not mention my name to her. I have suggested to you a marriage which I think would tend to make you happy, and would give you a stability in life which you want. It is perhaps better that I should be explicit at once. As an unmarried man I cannot continue to know you. You have said words of late which have driven me to this conclusion. I have thought about it much,—too much, perhaps, and I know that I am right. Miss Van Siever has beauty, and wealth, and intellect, and I think that she would appreciate the love of such a man as you are. Now go." And Mrs. Dobbs Broughton, standing upright, pointed to the door. Conway Dalrymple slowly took his Spanish hat from off the marble slab on which he had laid it, and left the room without saying a word. The interview had been quite long enough,

and there was nothing else which he knew how to say with effect.

Croquet is a pretty game out-of-doors, and chess is delightful in a drawing-room. Battledore and shuttlecock and hunt the slipper have also their attractions. Proverbs are good, and cross-questions with crooked answers may be made very amusing. But none of these games are equal to the game of love-making,—providing that the players can be quite sure that there shall be no heart in the matter. Any touch of heart not only destroys the pleasure of the game, but makes the player awkward and incapable and robs him of his skill. And thus it is that there are many people who cannot play the game at all. A deficiency of some needed internal physical strength prevents the owners of the heart from keeping a proper control over its valves, and thus emotion sets in, and the pulses are accelerated, and feeling supervenes. For such a one to attempt a game of love-making, is as though your friend with the gout should insist on playing croquet. A sense of the ridiculous, if nothing else, should in either case deter the afflicted one from the attempt. There was no such absurdity with our friend Mrs. Dobbs Broughton and Conway Dalrymple. Their valves and pulses were all right. They could play the game without the slightest danger of any inconvenient result;—of any inconvenient result, that is, as regarded their own feelings. Blind people cannot see and stupid people cannot understand,—and it might be that Mr. Dobbs Broughton, being both blind and stupid in such matters, might perceive something of the playing of the game and not know that it was only a game of skill.

When I say that as regarded these two lovers there was nothing of love between them, and that the game was therefore so far innocent, I would not be understood as asserting that these people had no hearts within their bosoms. Mrs. Dobbs Broughton probably loved her husband in a sensible, humdrum way, feeling him to be a bore, knowing him to be vulgar, aware that he often took a good deal more wine than was good for him, and that he was almost as uneducated as a hog. Yet she loved him, and showed her love by taking care that he should have things for dinner which he liked to eat. But in this alone there were to be found none of the charms of a fevered existence, and therefore Mrs. Dobbs Broughton, requiring those charms for her comfort, played her little game with Conway Dalrymple. And as regarded the artist himself, let no reader presume him to have been heartless because he flirted with Mrs. Dobbs Broughton. Doubtless he will marry some day, will have a large family for which he will work hard, and will make a good husband to some stout lady who will be careful in looking after his linen. But on the present occasion he fell into some slight trouble in spite of the innocence of his game. As he quitted his friend's room he heard the hall-door slammed heavily; then there was a quick step on the stairs, and on the landing-place above the first flight he met the master of the house, somewhat flurried, as it seemed, and not looking comfortable, either as regarded his person or his temper. "By George, he 's been drinking!" Conway said to himself, after the first glance. Now it certainly was the case that poor Dobbs Broughton would sometimes drink at improper hours.

"What the devil are you doing here?" said Dobbs Broughton to his friend the artist. "You 're always here. You 're here a doosed sight more than I like." Husbands when they have been drinking are very apt to make mistakes as to the purport of the game.

"Why, Dobbs," said the painter, "there 's something wrong with you."

"No, there ain't. There 's nothing wrong; and if there was, what 's that to you? I shan't ask you to pay anything for me, I suppose."

"Well;—I hope not."

"I won't have you here, and let that be an end of it. It 's all very well when I choose to have a few friends to dinner, but my wife can do very well without your fal-lalling here all day. Will you remember that, if you please?"

Conway Dalrymple, knowing that he had better not argue any question with a drunken man, took himself out of the house, shrugging his shoulders as he thought of the misery which his poor dear playfellow would now be called upon to endure.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A HERO AT HOME.

On the morning after his visit to Miss Demolines John Eames found himself at the Paddington station asking for a ticket for Guestwick, and as he picked up his change another gentleman also demanded a ticket for the same place. Had Guestwick been at Liverpool or Manchester, Eames would have thought nothing about it. It is a matter of course that men should always be going from London to Liverpool and Manchester; but it seemed odd to him that two men should want first-class tickets for so small a place as Guestwick at the same moment. And when, afterwards, he was placed by the guard in the same carriage with this other traveller, he could not but feel some little curiosity. The man was four or five years Johnny's senior, a good-looking fellow, with a pleasant face, and the outward appurtenances of a gentleman. The intelligent reader will no doubt be aware that the stranger was Major Grantly; but the intelligent reader has in this respect had much advantage over John Eames, who up to this time had never even heard of his cousin Grace Crawley's lover. "I think you were asking for a ticket for Guestwick?" said Johnny; whereupon the major owned that such was the case. "I lived at Guestwick the greater part of my life," said Johnny,

"and it 's the dullest, dearest little town in all England." "I never was there before," said the major, "and indeed I can hardly say I am going there now. I shall only pass through it." Then he got out his newspaper, and Johnny also got out his, and for a time there was no conversation between them. John remembered how holy was the errand upon which he was intent, and gathered his thoughts together, resolving that having so great a matter on his mind he would think about nothing else and speak about nothing at all. He was going down to Allington to ask Lily Dale for the last time whether she would be his wife; to ascertain whether he was to be successful or unsuccessful in the one great wish of his life; and, as such was the case with him,—as he had in hand a thing so vital, it could be nothing to him whether the chance companion of his voyage was an agreeable or a disagreeable person. He himself, in any of the ordinary circumstances of life, was prone enough to talk with any one he might meet. He could have travelled for twelve hours together with an old lady, and could listen to her or make her listen to him without half an hour's interruption. But this journey was made on no ordinary occasion, and it behoved him to think of Lily. Therefore, after the first little almost necessary effort at civility, he fell back into gloomy silence. He was going to do his best to win Lily Dale, and this doing of his best would require all his thought and all his energy.

And probably Major Grantly's mind was bent in the same direction. He, too, had his work before him, and could not look upon his work as a thing that was altogether pleasant. He might probably get that which

he was intent upon obtaining. He knew,—he almost knew,—that he had won the heart of the girl whom he was seeking. There had been that between him and her which justified him in supposing that he was dear to her, although no expression of affection had ever passed from her lips to his ears. Men may know all that they require to know on that subject without any plainly spoken words. Grace Crawley had spoken no word, and yet he had known,—at any rate had not doubted, that he could have the place in her heart of which he desired to be the master. She would never surrender herself altogether till she had taught herself to be sure of him to whom she gave herself. But she had listened to him with silence that had not rebuked him, and he had told himself that he might venture, without fear of that rebuke as to which the minds of some men are sensitive to a degree which other men cannot even understand. But for all this Major Grantly could not be altogether happy as to his mission. He would ask Grace Crawley to be his wife; but he would be ruined by his own success. And the remembrance that he would be severed from all his own family by the thing that he was doing, was very bitter to him. In generosity he might be silent about this to Grace, but who can endure to be silent on such a subject to the woman who is to be his wife? And then it would not be possible for him to abstain from explanation. He was now following her down to Allington, a step which he certainly would not have taken but for the misfortune which had befallen her father, and he must explain to her in some sort why he did so. He must say to her,—if not in so many words, still almost as plainly as words could speak,—I am

here now to ask you to be my wife, because you specially require the protection and countenance of the man who loves you, in the present circumstances of your father's affairs. He knew that he was doing right;—perhaps had some idea that he was doing nobly; but this very appreciation of his own good qualities made the task before him the more difficult.

Major Grantly had the Times, and John Eames had the Daily News, and they exchanged papers. One had the last Saturday, and the other the last Spectator, and they exchanged those also. Then at last when they were within half-an hour of the end of their journey, Major Grantly asked his companion what was the best inn at Guestwick. He had at first been minded to go on to Allington at once,—to go on to Allington and get his work done, and then return home or remain there, or find the nearest inn with a decent bed, as circumstances might direct him. But on reconsideration, as he drew nearer to the scene of his future operations, he thought that it might be well for him to remain that night at Guestwick. He did not quite know how far Allington was from Guestwick, but he did know that it was still mid-winter, and that the days were very short. The Magpie was the best inn, Johnny said. Having lived at Guestwick all his life, and having a mother living there now, he had never himself put up at the Magpie, but he believed it to be a good country inn. They kept post-horses there, he knew. He did not tell the stranger that his late old friend Lord De Guest, and his present old friend, Lady Julia, always hired post-horses from the Magpie, but he grounded his ready assertion on the remembrance of that fact.

"I think I shall stay there to-night," said the major.

"You 'll find it pretty comfortable, I don't doubt," said Johnny. "Though, indeed, it always seems to me that a man alone at an inn has a very bad time of it. Reading is all very well, but one gets tired of it at last. And then I hate horse-hair chairs."

"It is n't very delightful," said the major, "but beggars must n't be choosers." Then there was a pause, after which the major spoke again. "You don't happen to know which way Allington lies?"

"Allington!" said Johnny.

"Yes, Allington. Is there not a village called Allington?"

"There is a village called Allington, certainly. It lies over there." And Johnny pointed with his finger through the window. "As you do not know the country you can see nothing, but I can see the Allington trees at this moment."

"I suppose there is no inn at Allington?"

"There 's a public-house, with a very nice clean bedroom. It is called the Red Lion. Mrs. Forrard keeps it. I would quite as soon stay there as at the Magpie. Only if they don't expect you, they would n't have much for dinner."

"Then you know the village of Allington?"

"Yes, I know the village of Allington very well. I have friends living there. Indeed, I may say I know everybody in Allington."

"Do you know Mrs. Dale?"

"Mrs. Dale?" said Johnny. "Yes, I know Mrs. Dale. I have known Mrs. Dale pretty nearly all my life." Who could this man be who was going down to see Mrs. Dale,—Mrs. Dale, and consequently, Lily

Dale? He thought that he knew Mrs. Dale so well, that she could have no visitor of whom he would not be entitled to have some knowledge. But Major Grantly had nothing more to say at the moment about Mrs. Dale. He had never seen Mrs. Dale in his life, and was now going to her house, not to see her, but a friend of hers. He found that he could not very well explain this to a stranger, and therefore at the moment he said nothing further. But Johnny would not allow the subject to be dropped. "Have you known Mrs. Dale long?" he asked.

"I have not the pleasure of knowing her at all," said the major.

"I thought, perhaps, by your asking after her——"

"I intend to call upon her, that is all. I suppose they will have an omnibus here from the Magpie?" Eames said that there no doubt would be an omnibus from the Magpie, and then they were at their journey's end.

For the present we will follow John Eames, who went at once to his mother's house. It was his intention to remain there for two or three days, and then go over to the house, or rather to the cottage, of his great ally, Lady Julia, which lay just beyond Guestwick Manor, and somewhat nearer to Allington than to the town of Guestwick. He had made up his mind that he would not himself go over to Allington till he could do so from Guestwick Cottage, as it was called, feeling that, under certain untoward circumstances,—should untoward circumstances arise,—Lady Julia's sympathy might be more endurable than that of his mother. But he would take care that it should be known at Allington that he was in the neighbourhood. He understood

the necessary stra of his campaign too well to suppose that he could startl .y into acquiescence.

With his own mother and sister John Eames was in these days quite a hero. He was a hero with them now, because in his early boyish days there had been so little about him that was heroic. Then ther had been a doubt whether h would ever earn his daily bread, and he had been a very heavy burden on the slight family resources in the matter of jackets and trousers. The pride taken in our Johnny had not been great, though the love felt for him had been warm. But gradually things had changed, and John Eames had become heroic in his mother's eyes. A chance circumstance had endeared him to Earl De Guest, and from that moment things had gone well with him. The earl had given him a watch and had left him a fortune, and Sir Raffle Buffle had made him a private secretary. In the old days, when Johnny's love for Lily Dale was first discussed by his mother and sister, they had thought it impossible that Lily should ever bring herself to regard with affection so humble a suitor;—for the Dales had ever held their heads up in the world. But now there is no misgiving on that score with Mrs. Eames and her daughter. Their wonder is that Lily Dale should be such a fool as to decline the love of such a man. So Johnny was received with the respect due to a hero, as well as with the affection belonging to a son;—by which I mean it to be inferred that Mrs. Eames had got a little bit of fish for dinner as well as a leg of mutton.

"A man came down in the train with me who says he is going over to Allington," said Johnny.

"I wonder who he can be. He is staying at the Magpie."

"A friend of Captain Dale's, probably," said Mary. Captain Dale was the squire's nephew and his heir.

"But this man was not going to the squire's. He was going to the Small House."

"Is he going to stay there?"

"I suppose not, as he asked about the inn." Then Johnny reflected that the man might probably be a friend of Crosbie's, and became melancholy in consequence. Crosbie might have thought it expedient to send an ambassador down to prepare the ground for him before he should venture again upon the scene himself. If it were so, would it not be well that he, John Eames, should get over to Lily as soon as possible, and not wait till he should be staying with Lady Julia?

It was at any rate incumbent upon him to call upon Lady Julia the next morning, because of his commission. The Berlin wool might remain in his portmanteau till his portmanteau should go with him to the cottage; but he would take the spectacles at once, and he must explain to Lady Julia what the lawyers had told him about the income. So he hired a saddle-horse from the Magpie and started after breakfast on the morning after his arrival. In his unheroic days he would have walked,—as he had done, scores of times, over the whole distance from Guestwick to Allington. But now in these grander days, he thought about his boots and the mud, and the formal appearance of the thing. "Ah dear!" he said to himself, as the nag walked slowly out of the town, "it used to be

better with me in the old days. I hardly hoped that she would ever accept me, but at least she had never refused me. And then that brute had not as yet made his way down to Allington!"

He did not go very fast. After leaving the town he trotted on for a mile or so. But when he got to the palings of Guestwick Manor he let the animal walk again, and his mind ran back over the incidents of his life which were connected with the place. He remembered a certain long ramble which he had taken in those woods after Lily had refused him. That had been subsequent to the Crosbie episode in his life, and Johnny had been led to hope by certain of his friends, —especially by Lord De Guest and his sister,—that he might then be successful. But he had been unsuccessful, and had passed the bitterest hour of his life wandering about in those woods. Since that he had been unsuccessful again and again; but the bitterness of failure had not been so strong with him as on that first occasion. He would try again now, and if he failed, he would fail for the last time. As he was thinking of all this, a gig overtook him on the road, and on looking round he saw that the occupant of the gig was the man who had travelled with him on the previous day in the train. Major Grantly was alone in the gig, and as he recognised John Eames he stopped his horse. "Are you also going to Allington?" he asked. John Eames, with something of scorn in his voice, replied that he had no intention of going to Allington on that day. He still thought that this man might be an emissary from Crosbie, and therefore resolved that but scant courtesy was due to him. "I am on my way there now," said Grantly, "and am

going to the house of your friend. May I tell her that I travelled with you yesterday?"

"Yes, sir," said Johnny. "You may tell her that you came down with John Eames."

"And are you John Eames?" asked the major.

"If you have no objection," said Johnny. "But I can hardly suppose you have ever heard my name before?"

"It is familiar to me, because I have the pleasure of knowing a cousin of yours, Miss Grace Crawley."

"My cousin is at present staying at Allington with Mrs. Dale," said Johnny.

"Just so," said the major, who now began to reflect that he had been indiscreet in mentioning Grace Crawley's name. No doubt every one connected with the family, all the Crawleys, all the Dales, and all the Eameses would soon know the business which had brought him down to Allington; but he need not have taken the trouble of beginning the story against himself. John Eames, in truth, had never even heard Major Grantly's name, and was quite unaware of the fortune which awaited his cousin. Even after what he had now been told, he still suspected the stranger of being an emissary from his enemy; but the major, not giving him credit for his ignorance, was annoyed with himself for having told so much of his own history. "I will tell the ladies that I had the pleasure of meeting you," he said; "that is, if I am lucky enough to see them." And then he drove on.

"I know I should hate that fellow if I were to meet him anywhere again," said Johnny to himself as he rode on. "When I take an aversion to a fellow at first sight, I always stick to it. It 's instinct, I suppose."

And he was still giving himself credit for the strength of his instincts when he reached Lady Julia's cottage. He rode at once into the stable-yard, with the privilege of an accustomed friend of the house, and having given up his horse, entered the cottage by the back door. "Is my lady at home, Jemima?" he said to the maid.

"Yes, Mr. John; she is in the drawing-room, and friends of yours are with her." Then he was announced, and found himself in the presence of Lady Julia, Lily Dale, and Grace Crawley.

He was very warmly received. Lady Julia really loved him dearly, and would have done anything in her power to bring about a match between him and Lily. Grace was his cousin, and though she had not seen him often, she was prepared to love him dearly as Lily's lover. And Lily,—Lily loved him dearly too, —if only she could have brought herself to love him as he wished to be loved! To all of them Johnny Eames was something of a hero. At any rate in the eyes of all of them he possessed those virtues which seemed to them to justify them in petting him and making much of him.

"I am so glad you 've come,—that is, if you 've brought my spectacles," said Lady Julia.

"My pockets are crammed with spectacles," said Johnny.

"And when are you coming to me?"

"I was thinking of Tuesday."

"No; don't come till Wednesday. But I mean Monday. No; Monday won't do. Come on Tuesday early and drive me out. And now tell us the news."

Johnny swore that there was no news. He made a

brave attempt to be gay and easy before Lily; but he failed,—and he knew that he failed,—and he knew that she knew that he failed. "Mamma will be so glad to see you," said Lily. "I suppose you have n't seen Bell yet?"

"I only got to Guestwick yesterday afternoon," said he.

"And it will be so nice our having Grace at the Small House,—won't it? Uncle Christopher has quite taken a passion for Grace,—so that I am hardly anybody now in the Allington world."

"By-the-bye," said Johnny, "I came down here with a friend of yours, Grace."

"A friend of mine?" said Grace.

"So he says, and he is at Allington at this moment. He passed me in a gig going there."

"And what is his name?" Lily asked.

"I have not the remotest idea," said Johnny. "He is a man about my own age, very good-looking, and apparently very well able to take care of himself. He is short-sighted, and holds a glass in one eye when he looks out of a carriage window. That 's all that I know about him."

Grace Crawley's face had become suffused with blushes at the first mention of the friend and the gig; but then Grace blushed very easily. Lily knew all about it at once,—at once divined who must be the friend in the gig, and was almost beside herself with joy. Lady Julia, who had heard no more of the major than had Johnny, was still clever enough to perceive that the friend must be a particular friend,—for she had noticed Miss Crawley's blushes. And Grace herself had no doubt as to the man. The picture of her lover,

with the glass in his eye as he looked out of the window, had been too perfect to admit of a doubt. In her distress she put out her hand and took hold of Lily's dress.

"And you say he is at Allington now?" said Lily.

"I have no doubt he is at the Small House at this moment," said Johnny.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SHOWING HOW MAJOR GRANTLY TOOK A WALK.

Major Grantly drove his gig into the yard of the Red Lion at Allington, and from thence walked away at once to Mrs. Dale's house. When he reached the village he had hardly made up his mind as to the way in which he would begin his attack; but now, as he went down the street, he resolved that he would first ask for Mrs. Dale. Most probably he would find himself in the presence of Mrs. Dale and her daughter, and of Grace also, at his first entrance; and if so, his position would be awkward enough. He almost regretted now that he had not written to Mrs. Dale, and asked for an interview. His task would be very difficult if he should find all the ladies together. But he was strong in the feeling that when his purpose was told it would meet the approval at any rate of Mrs. Dale; and he walked boldly on, and bravely knocked at the door of the Small House, as he had already learned that Mrs. Dale's residence was called by all the neighbourhood. Nobody was at home, the servant said; and then, when the visitor began to make further inquiry, the girl explained that the two young ladies had walked as far as Guestwick Cottage, and that Mrs. Dale was at this moment at the Great House with the squire. She had gone across soon after the

young ladies had started. The maid, however, was interrupted before she had finished telling all this to the major, by finding her mistress behind her in the passage. Mrs. Dale had returned, and had entered the house from the lawn.

"I am here now, Jane," said Mrs. Dale, "if the gentleman wishes to see me."

Then the major announced himself. "My name is Major Grantly," said he; and he was blundering on with some words about his own intrusion, when Mrs. Dale begged him to follow her into the drawing-room. He had muttered something to the effect that Mrs. Dale would not know who he was; but Mrs. Dale knew all about him, and had heard the whole of Grace's story from Lily. She and Lily had often discussed the question whether, under existing circumstances, Major Grantly should feel himself bound to offer his hand to Grace, and the mother and daughter had differed somewhat on the matter. Mrs. Dale had held that he was not so bound, urging that the unfortunate position in which Mr. Crawley was placed was so calamitous to all connected with him, as to justify any man, not absolutely engaged, in abandoning the thoughts of such a marriage. Mrs. Dale had spoken of Major Grantly's father and mother and brother and sister, and had declared her opinion that they were entitled to consideration. But Lily had opposed this idea very stoutly, asserting that in an affair of love a man should think neither of father or brother or mother or sister. "If he is worth anything," Lily had said, "he will come to her now,—now in her trouble; and will tell her that she at least has got a friend who will be true to her. If he does that, then I shall think that

there is something of the poetry and nobleness of love left." In answer to this Mrs. Dale had replied that women had no right to expect from men such self-denying nobility as that. "I don't expect it, mamma," said Lily. "And I am sure that Grace does not. Indeed, I am quite sure that Grace does not expect even to see him ever again. She never says so, but I know that she has made up her mind about it. Still I think he ought to come." "It can hardly be that a man is bound to do a thing, the doing of which, as you confess, would be almost more than noble," said Mrs. Dale. And so the matter had been discussed between them. But now, as it seemed to Mrs. Dale, the man had come to do this noble thing. At any rate he was there in her drawing-room, and before, either of them had sat down he had contrived to mention Grace. "You may not probably have heard my name," he said, "but I am acquainted with your friend, Miss Crawley."

"I know your name very well, Major Grantly. My brother-in-law who lives over yonder, Mr. Dale, knows your father very well,—or he did some years ago. And I have heard him say that he remembers you."

"I recollect. He used to be staying at Ullathorne. But that is a long time ago. Is he at home now?"

"Mr. Dale is almost always at home. He very rarely goes away, and I am sure would be glad to see you."

Then there was a little pause in the conversation. They had managed to seat themselves, and Mrs. Dale had said enough to put her visitor fairly at his ease. If he had anything special to say to her, he must say it;—any request or proposition to make as to Grace

Crawley, he must make it. And he did make it at once. "My object in coming to Allington," he said, "was to see Miss Crawley."

"She and my daughter have taken a long walk to call on a friend, and I am afraid they will stay for lunch; but they will certainly be home between three and four, if that is not too long for you to remain at Allington."

"Oh dear, no," said he. "It will not hurt me to wait."

"It certainly will not hurt me, Major Grantly. Perhaps you will lunch with me?"

"I 'll tell you what, Mrs. Dale; if you 'll permit me, I 'll explain to you why I have come here. Indeed, I have intended to do so all through, and I can only ask you to keep my secret, if after all it should require to be kept."

"I will certainly keep any secret that you may ask me to keep," said Mrs. Dale, taking off her bonnet.

"I hope there may be no need of one," said Major Grantly. "The truth is, Mrs. Dale, that I have known Miss Crawley for some time,—nearly for two years now, and,—I may as well speak it out at once,—I have made up my mind to ask her to be my wife. That is why I am here." Considering the nature of the statement, which must have been embarrassing, I think that it was made with fluency and simplicity.

"Of course, Major Grantly, you know that I have no authority with our young friend," said Mrs. Dale. "I mean that she is not connected with us by family ties. She has a father and mother, living, as I believe, in the same county with yourself."

"I know that, Mrs. Dale."

"And you may, perhaps, understand that, as Miss Crawley is now staying with me, I owe it in a measure to her friends to ask you whether they are aware of your intention."

"They are not aware of it."

"I know that at the present moment they are in great trouble."

Mrs. Dale was going on, but she was interrupted by Major Grantly.

"That is just it," he said. "There are circumstances at present which make it almost impossible that I should go to Mr. Crawley and ask his permission to address his daughter. I do not know whether you have heard the whole story?"

"As much, I believe, as Grace could tell me."

"He is, I believe, in such a state of mental distress as to be hardly capable of giving me a considerate answer. And I should not know how to speak to him, or how not to speak to him, about this unfortunate affair. But, Mrs. Dale, you will, I think, perceive that the same circumstances make it imperative upon me to be explicit to Miss Crawley. I think I am the last man to boast of a woman's regard, but I had learned to think that I was not indifferent to Grace. If that be so, what must she think of me if I stay away from her now?"

"She understands too well the weight of the misfortune which has fallen upon her father to suppose that any one not connected with her can be bound to share it."

"That is just it. She will think that I am silent for that reason. I have determined that that shall not keep me silent, and, therefore, I have come here. I

may, perhaps, be able to bring comfort to her in her trouble. As regards my worldly position,—though, indeed, it will not be very good,—as hers is not good either, you will not think yourself bound to forbid me to see her on that head."

"Certainly not. I need hardly say that I fully understand that, as regards money, you are offering everything where you can get nothing."

"And you understand my feeling?"

"Indeed I do,—and appreciate the great nobility of your love for Grace. You shall see her here, if you wish it,—and to-day, if you choose to wait." Major Grantly said that he would wait and would see Grace on that afternoon. Mrs. Dale again suggested that he should lunch with her, but this he declined. She then proposed that he should go across and call upon the squire, and thus consume his time. But to this he also objected. He was not exactly in the humour, he said, to renew so old and so slight an acquaintance at that time. Mr. Dale would probably have forgotten him, and would be sure to ask what had brought him to Allington. He would go and take a walk, he said, and come again exactly at four. Mrs. Dale again expressed her certainty that the young ladies would be back by that time, and Major Grantly left the house.

Mrs. Dale when she was left alone could not but compare the good fortune which was awaiting Grace, with the evil fortune which had fallen on her own child. Here was a man who was at all points a gentleman. Such, at least, was the character which Mrs. Dale at once conceded to him. And Grace had chanced to come across this man, and to please his eye, and satisfy his taste, and be loved by him. And

the result of that chance would be that Grace would have everything given to her that the world has to give worth acceptance. She would have a companion for her life whom she could trust, admire, love, and of whom she could be infinitely proud. Mrs. Dale was not at all aware whether Major Grantly might have five hundred a year to spend, or five thousand,—or what sum intermediate between the two,—nor did she give much of her thoughts at the moment to that side of the subject. She knew without thinking of it,—or fancied that she knew, that there were means sufficient for comfortable living. It was solely the nature and character of the man that was in her mind, and the sufficiency that was to be found in them for a wife's happiness. But her daughter, her Lily, had come across a man who was a scoundrel, and, as the consequence of that meeting, all her life was marred! Could any credit be given to Grace for her success, or any blame attached to Lily for her failure? Surely not the latter! How was her girl to have guarded herself from a love so unfortunate, or have avoided the rock on which her vessel had been shipwrecked? Then many bitter thoughts passed through Mrs. Dale's mind, and she almost envied Grace Crawley her lover. Lily was contented to remain as she was, but Lily's mother could not bring herself to be satisfied that her child should fill a lower place in the world than other girls. It had ever been her idea,—an idea probably never absolutely uttered even to herself, but not the less practically conceived,—that it is the business of a woman to be married. That her Lily should have been won and not worn, had been, and would be, a trouble to her for ever.

Major Grantly went back to the inn and saw his horse fed, and smoked a cigar, and then, finding that it was still only just one o'clock, he started for a walk. He was careful not to go out of Allington by the road he had entered it, as he had no wish to encounter Grace and her friend on their return into the village; so he crossed a little brook which runs at the bottom of the hill on which the chief street of Allington is built, and turned into a field-path to the left as soon as he had got beyond the houses. Not knowing the geography of the place he did not understand that by taking that path he was making his way back to the squire's house; but it was so; and after sauntering on for about a mile and crossing back again over the stream, of which he took no notice, he found himself leaning across a gate, and looking into a paddock on the other side of which was the high wall of a gentleman's garden. To avoid this he went on a little further and found himself on a farm road, and before he could retrace his steps so as not to be seen, he met a gentleman whom he presumed to be the owner of the house. It was the squire surveying his home farm, as was his daily custom; but Major Grantly had not perceived that the house must of necessity be Allington House, having been aware that he had passed the entrance to the place, as he entered the village on the other side. "I 'm afraid I 'm intruding," he said, lifting his hat. "I came up the path yonder, not knowing that it would lead me so close to a gentleman's house."

"There is a right of way through the fields on to the Guestwick road," said the squire, "and therefore you are not trespassing in any sense; but we are not particular about such things down here, and you would be

very welcome if there were no right of way. If you are a stranger, perhaps you would like to see the outside of the old house. People think it picturesque."

Then Major Grantly became aware that this must be the squire, and he was annoyed with himself for his own awkwardness in having thus come upon the house. He would have wished to keep himself altogether unseen if it had been possible,—and especially unseen by this old gentleman, to whom, now that he had met him, he was almost bound to introduce himself. But he was not absolutely bound to do so, and he determined that he would still keep his peace. Even if the squire should afterwards hear of his having been there, what would it matter? But to proclaim himself at the present moment would be disagreeable to him. He permitted the squire, however, to lead him to the front of the house, and in a few moments was standing on the terrace hearing an account of the architecture of the mansion.

"You can see the date still in the brickwork of one of the chimneys,—that is, if your eyes are very good you can see it,—1617. It was completed in that year, and very little has been done to it since. We think the chimneys are pretty."

"They are very pretty," said the major. "Indeed, the house altogether is as graceful as it can be."

"Those trees are old, too," said the squire, pointing to two cedars which stood at the side of the house. "They say they are older than the house, but I don't feel sure of it. There was a mansion here before, very nearly, though not quite, on the same spot."

"Your own ancestors were living here before that, I suppose?" said Grantly, meaning to be civil.

"Well, yes; two or three hundred years before it, I suppose. If you don't mind coming down to the churchyard, you 'll get an excellent view of the house; —by far the best that there is. By-the-bye, would you like to step in and take a glass of wine?"

"I 'm very much obliged," said the major, "but indeed I 'd rather not." Then he followed the squire down to the churchyard, and was shown the church as well as the view of the house, and the vicarage, and a view over to Allington woods from the vicarage gate, of which the squire was very fond, and in this way he was taken back on to the Guestwick side of the village, and even down on to the road by which he had entered it, without in the least knowing where he was. He looked at his watch and saw that it was past two. "I 'm very much obliged to you, sir," he said, again taking off his hat to the squire, "and if I shall not be intruding I 'll make my way back to the village."

"What village?" said the squire.

"To Allington," said Grantly.

"This is Allington," said the squire; and as he spoke, Lily Dale and Grace Crawley turned a corner from the Guestwick road and came close upon them. "Well, girls, I did not expect to see you," said the squire; "your mamma told me you would n't be back till it was nearly dark, Lily."

"We have come back earlier than we intended," said Lily. She of course had seen the stranger with her uncle, and knowing the ways of the squire in such matters had expected to be introduced to him. But the reader will be aware that no introduction was possible. It never occurred to Lily that this man could be the Major Grantly of whom she and Grace had

been talking during the whole length of the walk home. But Grace and her lover had of course known each other at once, and Grantly, though he was abashed and almost dismayed by the meeting, of course came forward and gave his hand to his friend. Grace in taking it did not utter a word.

"Perhaps I ought to have introduced myself to you as Major Grantly," said he, turning to the squire.

"Major Grantly! Dear me! I had no idea that you were expected in these parts."

"I have come without being expected."

"You are very welcome, I 'm sure. I hope your father is well? I used to know him some years ago, and I dare say he has not forgotten me." Then, while the girls stood by in silence, and while Grantly was endeavouring to escape, the squire invited him very warmly to send his portmanteau up to the house. "We 'll have the ladies up from the house below, and make it as little dull for you as possible." But this would not have suited Grantly,—at any rate would not suit him till he should know what answer he was to have. He excused himself therefore, pleading a positive necessity to be at Guestwick that evening, and then, explaining that he had already seen Mrs. Dale, he expressed his intention of going back to the Small House in company with the ladies, if they would allow him. The squire, who did not as yet quite understand it all, bade him a formal adieu, and Lily led the way home down behind the churchyard wall and through the bottom of the gardens belonging to the Great House. She of course knew now who the stranger was, and did all in her power to relieve Grace of her embarrassment. Grace had hitherto not spoken a

single word since she had seen her lover, nor did she say a word to him in their walk to the house. And, in truth, he was not much more communicative than Grace. Lily did all the talking, and with wonderful female skill contrived to have some words ready for use till they all found themselves together in Mrs. Dale's drawing-room. "I have caught a major, mamma, and landed him," said Lily, laughing; "but I 'm afraid, from what I hear, that you had caught him first."

CHAPTER XXIX.

MISS LILY DALE'S LOGIC.

Lady Julia De Guest always lunched at one exactly, and it was not much past twelve when John Eames made his appearance at the cottage. He was of course told to stay, and of course said that he would stay. It had been his purpose to lunch with Lady Julia; but then he had not expected to find Lily Dale at the cottage. Lily herself would have been quite at her ease, protected by Lady Julia, and somewhat protected also by her own powers of fence, had it not been that Grace was there also. But Grace Crawley, from the moment that she had heard the description of the gentleman who looked out of the window with his glass in his eye, had by no means been at her ease. Lily saw at once that she could not be brought to join in any conversation, and both John and Lady Julia, in their ignorance of the matter in hand, made matters worse.

"So that was Major Grantly?" said John. "I have heard of him before, I think. He is the son of the old archdeacon, is he not?"

"I don't know about old archdeacon," said Lady Julia. "The archdeacon is the son of the old bishop whom I remember very well. And it is not so very long since the bishop died either."

"I wonder what he 's doing at Allington?" said Johnny.

"I think he knows my uncle," said Lily.

"But he 's going to call on your mother," he said. Then Johnny remembered that the major had said something as to knowing Miss Crawley, and for the moment he was silent.

"I remember when they talked of making the son a bishop also," said Lady Julia.

"What;—this same man who is now a major?" said Johnny.

"No, you goose. He is not the son; he is the grandson. They were going to make the archdeacon a bishop, and I remember hearing that he was terribly disappointed. He is getting to be an old man now, I suppose; and yet, dear me, how well I remember his father."

"He did n't look like a bishop's son," said Johnny.

"How does a bishop's son look?" Lily asked.

"I suppose he ought to have some sort of clerical tinge about him; but this fellow had nothing of that kind."

"But then this fellow, as you call him," said Lily, "is only the son of an archdeacon."

"That accounts for it, I suppose," said Johnny.

But during all this time Grace did not say a word, and Lily perceived it. Then she bethought herself as to what she had better do. Grace, she knew, could not be comfortable where she was. Nor, indeed, was it probable that Grace would be very comfortable in returning home. There could not be much ease for Grace till the coming meeting between her and Major Grantly should be over. But it would be better that Grace should go back to Allington at once; and better

also, perhaps, for Major Grantly that it should be so. "Lady Julia," she said, "I don't think we 'll mind stopping for lunch to-day."

"Nonsense, my dear; you promised."

"I think we must break our promise; I do indeed. You must n't be angry with us." And Lily looked at Lady Julia, as though there was something which Lady Julia ought to understand, which she, Lily, could not quite explain. I fear that Lily was false, and intended her old friend to believe that she was running away because John Eames had come there.

"But you will be famished," said Lady Julia.

"We shall live through it," said Lily.

"It is out of the question that I should let you walk all the way here from Allington and all the way back without taking something."

"We shall just be home in time for lunch if we go now," said Lily. "Will not that be best, Grace?"

Grace hardly knew what would be best. She only knew that Major Grantly was at Allington, and that he had come thither to see her. The idea of hurrying back after him was unpleasant to her, and yet she was so flurried that she felt thankful to Lily for taking her away from the cottage. The matter was compromised at last. They remained for half an hour, and ate some biscuits, and pretended to drink a glass of wine, and then they started. John Eames, who in truth believed that Lily Dale was running away from him, was by no means well pleased, and when the girls were gone, did not make himself so agreeable to his old friend as he should have done. "What a fool I am to come here at all," he said, throwing himself into an arm-chair as soon as the front door was closed.

"That 's very civil to me, John!"

"You know what I mean, Lady Julia. I am a fool to come near her, until I can do so without thinking more of her than I do of any other girl in the county."

"I don't think you have anything to complain of as yet," said Lady Julia, who had in some sort perceived that Lily's retreat had been on Grace's account, and not on her own. "It seems to me that Lily was very glad to see you, and when I told her that you were coming to stay here, and would be near them for some days, she seemed to be quite pleased,—she did indeed."

"Then why did she run away the moment I came in?" said Johnny.

"I think it was something you said about that man who has gone to Allington."

"What difference can the man make to her? The truth is, I despise myself,—I do indeed, Lady Julia. Only think of my meeting Crosbie at dinner the other day, and his having the impertinence to come up and shake hands with me."

"I suppose he did n't say anything about what happened at the Paddington Station?"

"No; he did n't speak about that. I wish I knew whether she cares for him still. If I thought she did, I would never speak another word to her,—I mean about myself. Of course I am not going to quarrel with them. I am not such a fool as that." Then Lady Julia tried to comfort him, and succeeded so far that he was induced to eat the mince veal that had been intended for the comfort and support of the two young ladies who had run away.

"Do you think it is he?" were the first words which

Grace said when they were fairly on their way back together.

"Of course it is he;—did you not hear what they said?"

"His coming was so unlikely. I cannot understand that he should come. He let me leave Silverbridge without seeing me,—and I thought that he was quite right."

"And I think he is quite right to come here. I am very glad he has come. It shows that he has really something like a heart inside him. Had he not come, or sent, or written, or taken some step before the trial comes on to make you know that he was thinking of you, I should have said that he was as hard,—as hard as any other man that I ever heard of. Men are so hard! But I don't think he is, now. I am beginning to regard him as the one chevalier sans peur et sans reproche, and to fancy that you ought to go down on your knees before him, and kiss his highness's shoebuckle. In judging of men one's mind vacillates so quickly between the scorn which is due to a false man and the worship which is due to a true man." Then she was silent for a moment, but Grace said nothing, and Lily continued, "I tell you fairly, Grace, that I shall expect very much from you now."

"Much in what way, Lily?"

"In the way of worship. I shall not be content that you should merely love him. If he has come here, as he must have done, to say that the moment of the world's reproach is the moment he has chosen to ask you to be his wife, I think that you will owe him more than love."

"I shall owe him more than love, and I will pay

him more than love," said Grace. There was something in the tone of her voice as she spoke which made Lily stop her and look up into her face. There was a smile there which Lily had never seen before, and which gave a beauty to her which was wonderful to Lily's eyes. Surely this lover of Grace's must have seen her smile like that, and therefore had loved her and was giving such wonderful proof of his love. "Yes," continued Grace, standing and looking at her friend, "you may stare at me, Lily, but you may be sure that I will do for Major Grantly all the good that I can do for him."

"What do you mean, Grace?"

"Never mind what I mean. You are very imperious in managing your own affairs, and you must let me be equally so in mine."

"But I tell you everything."

"Do you suppose that if—if—if in real truth it can possibly be the case that Major Grantly shall have come here to offer me his hand when we are all ground down into the dust as we are, do you think that I will let him sacrifice himself? Would you?"

"Certainly. Why not? There will be no sacrifice. He will be asking for that which he wishes to get; and you will be bound to give it to him."

"If he wants it, where is his nobility? If it be as you say, he will have shown himself noble, and his nobility will have consisted in this, that he has been willing to take that which he does not want, in order that he may succour one whom he loves. I also will succour one whom I love as best I know how." Then she walked on quickly before her friend, and Lily stood for a moment thinking before she followed her. They

were now on a field-path, by which they were enabled to escape the road back to Allington for the greater part of the distance, and Grace had reached a stile, and had clambered over it before Lily had caught her.

"You must not go away by yourself," said Lily.

"I don't wish to go away by myself."

"I want you to stop a moment and listen to me. I am sure you are wrong in this,—wrong for both your sakes. You believe that he loves you?"

"I thought he did once; and if he has come here to see me, I suppose he does still."

"If that be the case, and if you also love him——"

"I do. I make no mystery about that to you. I do love him with all my heart. I love him to-day, now that I believe him to be here, and that I suppose I shall see him, perhaps this very afternoon. And I loved him yesterday, when I thought that I should never see him again. I do love him. I do. I love him so well that I will never do him an injury."

"That being so, if he makes you an offer you are bound to accept it. I do not think that you have an alternative."

"I have an alternative, and I shall use it. Why don't you take my cousin John?"

"Because I like somebody else better. If you have got as good a reason I won't say another word to you."

"And why don't you take that other person?"

"Because I cannot trust his love; that is why. It is not very kind of you, opening my sores afresh, when I am trying to heal yours."

"Oh, Lily, am I unkind,—unkind to you, who have been so generous to me?"

"I 'll forgive you all that and a deal more if you

will only listen to me and try to take my advice. Because this major of yours does a generous thing which is for the good of you both,—the infinite good of both of you,—you are to emulate his generosity by doing a thing which will be for the good of neither of you. That is about it. Yes, it is, Grace. You cannot doubt that he has been meaning this for some time past; and, of course, if he looks upon you as his own,—and I dare say, if the whole truth is to be told, he does——"

"But I am not his own."

"Yes, you are, in one sense; you have just said so with a great deal of energy. And if it be so,—let me see, where was I?"

"Oh, Lily, you need not mind where you were."

"But I do mind, and I hate to be interrupted in my arguments. Yes, just that. If he saw his cow sick, he 'd try to doctor the cow in her sickness. He sees that you are sick, and of course he comes to your relief."

"I am not Major Grantly's cow."

"Yes, you are."

"Nor his dog, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is his, except—except, Lily, the dearest friend that he has on the face of the earth. He cannot have a friend that will go further for him than I will. He will never know how far I will go to serve him. You don't know his people, nor do I know them. But I know what they are. His sister is married to a marquis."

"What has that to do with it?" said Lily sharply. "If she were married to an archduke, what difference would that make?"

"They are proud people,—all of them,—and rich; and they live with high persons in the world."

"I did n't care though they lived with the royal family, and had the Prince of Wales for their bosom friend. It only shows how much better he is than they are."

"But think what my family is,—how we are situated! When my father was simply poor I did not care about it, because he has been born and bred a gentleman. But now he is disgraced. Yes, Lily, he is. I am bound to say so, at any rate to myself, when I am thinking of Major Grantly; and I will not carry that disgrace into a family which would feel it so keenly as they would do." Lily, however, went on with her arguments, and was still arguing, when they turned the corner of the lane, and came upon Lily's uncle and the major himself.

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